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THE INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

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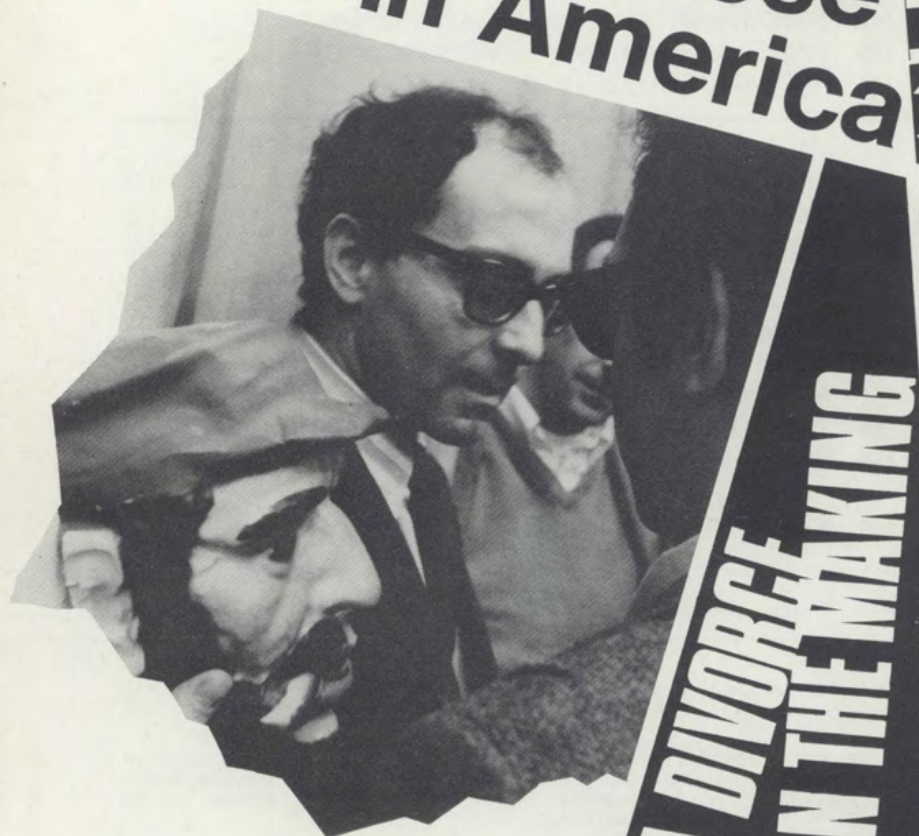
SIGHT AND SOUND is an independent critical magazine sponsored and published by the British Film Institute. It is not an organ for the expression of official British Film Institute policy; signed articles represent the views of their authors, and not necessarily those of the Editorial Board.

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GODARD



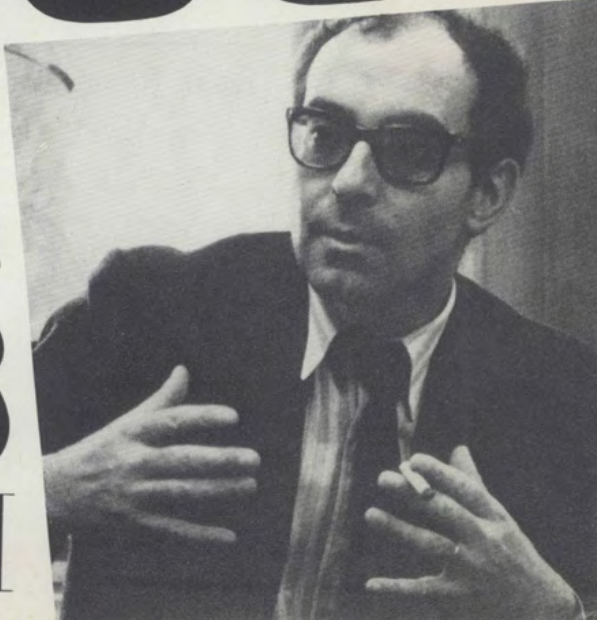
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A DIVORCE IN THE MAKING

TOO LATE US

by Claire Clouzot



TOO MUCH

FOR A GREAT NUMBER of years, Jean-Luc Godard has been attached to America by an umbilical cord. Some fourteen years ago, he found his film inspiration in the Hollywood cinema, and in his works he paid homage to it, imitated it, quoted it and parodied it. His teachers were Fritz Lang, Howard Hawks, Don Siegel, Samuel Fuller, Fritz Lang and many others became his friends.

He read American novels, became acquainted with all aspects of the American culture. But, as with all distant relationships, the idyll subsided, the links loosened up along the years, it worsened and finally deteriorated. Godard slowly passed from an aesthetic admiration to a denial of American psychological drama, from an acceptance of the culture to a rejection of the phenomenon called 'Americanisation of the world.' This passage corresponds to the cinéaste's evolution from aesthetic to socio-political consciousness, or from adolescence to adulthood.

Through his fifteen features, the development appears as follows. At first he was full of regard for American gangster films and he tried to imitate *Scarface* in *A Bout de Souffle*, which—in his own words—turned out to be more like 'Alice in Wonderland'. Then he winked tenderly at musical comedies and at Cyd Charisse in *Une Femme est une Femme*. He began gently to mock some aspects of the US in *Le Mépris*, where he stigmatised the elementary monetary philosophy and the dictatorship of the producer via the role of Jack Palance. *Bande à Part* was the last—and already sad—nostalgic expression of his affection for America. Beginning with 1964 and *Une Femme Mariée*, I see the first warning signal of the danger of Americanisation in his attacks on advertising. *Alphaville* is the undisguised description of that dehumanisation and computerisation which he criticises in America.

It was in *Pierrot le Fou* that he took sides politically against the US military involvement in Vietnam and declared he would mention it in his films as long as the war lasted. He kept this promise in *Masculin Féminin*. *Made in USA* contained probably the last teasing reference to former US 'favourites' through the names of the characters, but the title and the allusions to American violence came through stronger than ever before. From then on, America became the target, as proved by *Deux ou Trois Choses que Je Sais d'Elle*, where the bitter role played by Raoul Lévy, and the *Life* Magazine atrocity photos echoed an anger and a wound deeper than ever. Next, Godard disarmingly declared his position of 'rejected outsider' and the suffering it caused him in the sincere *Far from Vietnam*. Finally, in *La Chinoise*, he turned to the pro-Chinese Communists, equated the Soviets with the Americans and demonstrated his irreversible separation from a former country of adoption. His cinematographic commitment was accomplished.

At that particular moment of his personal development, he accepted early this spring an offer from Leacock-Pennebaker, US distributors of *La Chinoise*, to tour twenty American universities with a print of *La Chinoise*.

In *La Chinoise*, five French young people—Véronique the student, Guillaume the actor, Yvonne the peasant girl, Henri the chemistry engineer and Kirilov the artist—decide to live together during one summer in an apartment lent them by friends. They are trying to form a Maoist cell and live according to the precepts of Chairman Mao. Henri is thrown out of the cell because he advocates the pro-Soviet Communist line and he is called the 'revisionist'. Yvonne, who was illiterate and resorted to prostitution to help Henri, is taught to read and she is able to sell *l'Humanité Nouvelle*. Kirilov commits suicide because of the uselessness of art in the context of the revolution. Véronique murders a Soviet Minister of Culture after killing another man by mistake and, going back to the university, she decides to pursue her violent activities. Guil-

laume applies the principles of revolution by starting the 'door-to-door' theatre. He is, in Godard's terms, the 'most advanced one' at the end of the film: "through studying Mao's thoughts, he has found his vocation, that is to say politics has made him discover his art."

This beautiful work, which salutes the coming of age of Maoist revolutionaries in the West and which delineates the Black African Comrade X as the 'correct' man, was Godard's compensation for his uneasiness at being in the land of Lyndon Johnson's capitalist prosperity. The other compensation was that he was to address the 'youth of knowledge' he had dealt with in *La Chinoise* and not Hollywood journalists or people from the commercial circuit; for it was expected that the Guillaumes, Véroniques and Kirilovs of American campuses would come to listen to him. Thus his tour was a way of ascertaining whether the students of America were or weren't like their French counterparts.

On the surface, Godard's decision to come on these conditions was irreproachable. He is the hero of this country's young generation because he rejects the power of America and because he has flouted conformism. It is not surprising that his admirers are dissidents, hippies or yuppies, underground film-makers and draft-resisters, future cinéastes and film students who denounce the Establishment or work against it. Each is fighting for the same goal in his own way, the French director with his free films and the students with pot-smoking, love-ins, sit-ins, draft-card burning and protests of all kinds. They were in tune and this 'new' America should have enabled Godard to disregard the old one.

The initial contact was somewhat awkward, for Godard is 'non-heroic'. The students had to cope with his refusal of glamour, while he had to cope with their literal-mindedness. They were much like his characters from *La Chinoise*—Yvonne asking for the definition of the word 'analysis' and Véronique, whose conversation oscillates between political rigidity and puns on class struggle and philosophy class. Godard stated publicly that he had been like Véronique two or three years earlier. Since the students are just now in their Véronique stage, could there be a dialogue?

* * *

He first went to Los Angeles. He had been only to New York before this recent tour. He had never set foot on Sunset Boulevard; he had never been near the studios where Hawks, Ford, Don Siegel or Otto Preminger shot the films he so admires, nor had he contemplated the gorgeous Californian scenery or dozens of the works where he found his creative motivation. And yet, when he arrived in California, he said he was depressed.

On his first stop, at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, the public discussions dealt with matters of aesthetics and his interlocutors were primarily film students or film-makers. Godard's approach to cinema had gained him innumerable supporters in America, long before his political engagement became apparent. Improvisation, absence of definite script, total spontaneity and even quotes from world events or advertisements are the credo both of Godard and of the underground cinéastes. For the Los Angeles students, Godard's absence of code is the only possible answer to the over-technological aspect of Hollywood and the insistence on tight plots. What they 'dig' is his phrase "I see no difference between life and cinema." Gene Youngblood, an underground journalist of the Los Angeles *Free Press*, wrote: "I am perfectly serious when I say that for me and for an increasing number of serious young people Jean-Luc Godard is as important as Sartre, Hesse and Dostoevski."

However, the time was past for Godard to talk about the aesthetics of cinema. In a panel discussion on the subject of

Hollywood, where he sat with King Vidor, Roger Corman, Peter Bogdanovitch and Samuel Fuller, the atmosphere degenerated into reciprocal indifference. In his opening statement, Godard cautiously compared himself with the directors present: "I don't want to be provocative . . . but it seems to me that all of you, each for different reasons, are no more Hollywood directors than I am," as if to excuse them. He closed by accusing commercial directors of being 'slaves'. With his incredible outspokenness, turning to Vidor he added: "Mr. Vidor, I'm really ashamed of what's happening to you, as I'm ashamed of what happened to people like Joseph von Sternberg or Fritz Lang . . ." As it turned out, both parties—except for Fuller, who respects Godard's films and is still the 'actor-friend' of the first sequence of *Pierrot le Fou*—were bored with each other. The American directors went into shop talk about questions of production, ignoring Godard who finally stared at the ceiling.

How could it be otherwise? "Every film is the result of the society that produced it; that's why the American cinema is so bad now. It reflects an unhealthy society," Godard attacked upon his arrival when he was interviewed by *Newsweek's* Raymond A. Sokolov. After such an opening statement, Godard's severe judgment of Yankee cinema could only increase when he was repeatedly asked about *Bonnie and Clyde* or assaulted by questions like "Why don't you work in the US?" or "Which are your favourite American film directors?", all of which greatly irritated him.

"*Bonnie and Clyde* is a traditional movie," he told flabbergasted audiences who had heard that he had been considered for directing it and that there is a real French craze for the film. "It's a dead film. And why? Because it was made according to a structure that has seen its day. When Arthur Penn was making *The Left-handed Gun*, he was inventive and fresh, just as Preminger was in *Laura* and Aldrich in *Attack* or *Kiss Me Deadly*. But now Aldrich is making stuff like *The Dirty Dozen*, and I mean it's really dirty . . . I think a person like Arthur Penn, who is a very intelligent and nice man, is not even aware of what he is doing. When he thinks he's inventing something, when he thinks he's finding something new, it's not new at all. It's only because he's doing it here in Hollywood and *there is no life in Hollywood* . . ." Just when the American public and critics had regained hope for their national industry, Godard was shattering it.

The disappointment of the crowd after Godard named Mack Sennett, D. W. Griffith and . . . Chaplin as his favourite American directors turned into the laughter of incomprehension when of all the film-makers alive in this country, he spoke out only in favour of Jerry Lewis. Godard uncompromisingly refused all contact with Hollywood, and threw away the script of a Western a Hollywood company wanted him to direct. He was very firm on this point: "As for working for Hollywood, I would not do it, no matter how much they might pay me . . ."

The trouble, though, was that Godard did not want to discuss aesthetics; he wanted to talk about politics. He was keen to know the reactions to *La Chinoise* in order to start a dialogue. So he moved on to the University of California at Berkeley, the most challenging campus of his tour, where he was sure to find politically committed students, radicals, activists. As his interpreter there, I was able to note the facts and the words pronounced on both sides. Three times a day for four days *La Chinoise* was projected to a full house. The overall response was one of surprise and enthusiasm. Surprise at the charm and fun of the film, enthusiasm for a subject which permitted Godard to do more than his usual nose-thumbing at conventionalism. Here he took a stand which immediately launched a political discussion.

In their basic views, Godard and his debate partners at Berkeley were in agreement. They hold similar positions on

American foreign policy, on the Third World, on Socialism and Communism, on Cuba, on China, and naturally on Vietnam. Godard endorsed the plea for freedom, decency, equality of the black people and their white defenders, when he said, à propos of Omar Diop, Comrade X of *La Chinoise*: "The lessons of the Third World are applicable to us because the Third World's problem is that it is hungry. We, on the contrary, are over-fed culturally and we eat things which are culturally unnecessary, so we must learn again what is our real nourishment. Three-quarters of the films are unnecessary but we do not realise it. The amazing thing is that, except for the Indians and the Arabs, cinema is made only by white-skinned people everywhere in the world. Films have been made for blacks but not by them. In fact, if they wanted to make films, they wouldn't even know how, for all the cinematic means have been invented by whites and for whites. Even in Guinea, which is rather revolutionary, and Algeria, which is trying, they do not make films of their own. The Western countries must listen to the lessons of the Third World because it is the European children who are underdeveloped intellectually and the Third World which is developed. In *La Chinoise*, everybody else gets reprimanded, but Comrade X's presence and what he says are correct."

His confession that he discovered imperialism from an aesthetic point of view ("Imperialism is a group of people who want to oblige others to make movies their way"), and that he found out about American imperialism when he signed a contract with a Hollywood company and physically experienced at 35 what a black man in Africa must feel much earlier, converged with the Berkeley students' rejection of the American power structure of which Hollywood is a part. He got an ovation on the subject of the fear of Chinese Communism when he declared, "Johnson wants to shoot when a Communist is yellow but he shakes hands with a Communist who is white . . ."

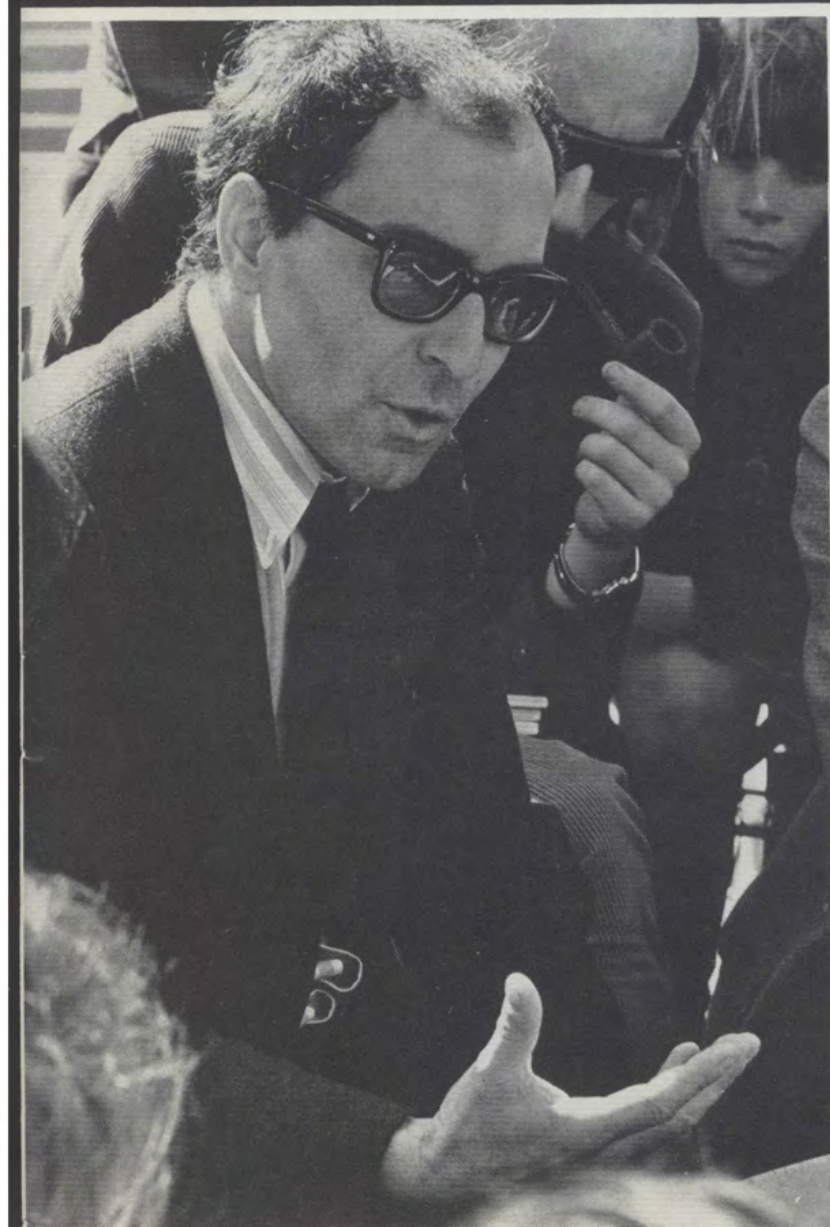
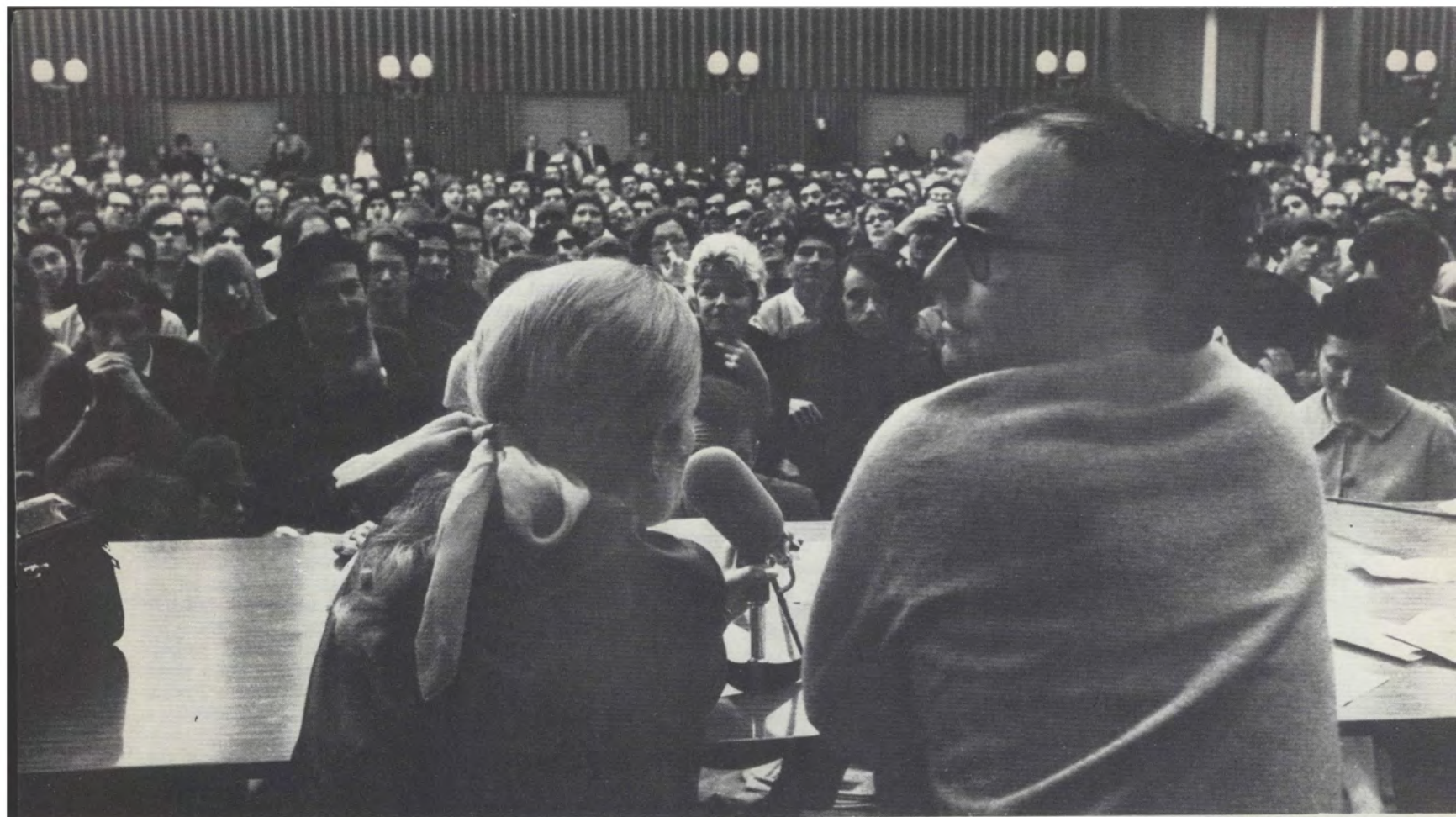
Godard often attained political harmony with his listeners, as Sol Landau, a documentarist and maker of a film about Castro, summed up one day after a panel on "Politics and Cinema". Paraphrasing the final insert of *La Chinoise*, he said: "Whatever criticism we have, we cannot just consider your film as the End of a Beginning but as the Beginning of a Beginning, for both revolutionary politics and revolutionary film-making. Our level of consciousness is expanded by seeing all of your works, which demand that we grow with you. So, in the words of another *compañero*, Viva Jean-Luc Godard!" Whereupon, seeing that Landau had put a Castro mask on his face, Godard murmured as if to himself: "Cinematografía o muerte venceremos . . ."

* * *

But the same people who agreed with Godard on politics became his opponents on the central issue stemming from *La Chinoise*, the question of revolution and the way to bring it about. Radical students at Berkeley are now convinced that the time for ideas, for persuasion and cinema propaganda is over and that, like Véronique, they should resort to violence with guns and Molotov cocktails. For them it is no longer a problem of discussion but a matter of emergency. But Godard, who acquired his political conscience at the age of 35, is a mature artist whose medium is not violence. He feels he should be on the side of those who take up guns but he does not intend to give up his camera for a rifle.

As Véronique opposed Francis Jeanson, the older Resistant of the Algerian war, partisan of a peaceful co-existence, so the activists are impatient to accelerate changes, even if it means blood-shedding. They pressed Godard with the question "Do you consider cinema a revolutionary tool?" After admitting that art lags behind revolution, Godard added: "I think that art is a special gun. Ideas are guns. A lot of people are dying from ideas and dying for ideas. A gun is a practical idea and an idea a theoretical gun. A film is a theoretical rifle and a rifle a practical film. Fortunately I don't have any gun for I am so short-sighted that I would probably kill all my friends. I have the impression I'm less myopic in a film, hence I prefer making films."

If they were not quite ready for Godard's sense of humour,



they were even less prepared for his ideas on what revolutionary cinema could be. "I think that the future for a revolutionary cinema is an amateur cinema. And television is the only true possibility we have of making a *popular cinema*, the true possibility for the people to express themselves on a screen, whereas it is always governments telling things to people. TV could be the great art for the masses and for the individual as well. Today, television is an endless repetition of the same things, whether it be in a socialist or a capitalist country. I find it grave that enemy countries should have television programmes which resemble each other. It saddened me to see that Cuban TV is entirely American. . . ."

The radicals narrowed the question down to whether Godard had succeeded in making a revolutionary film with *La Chinoise*. Someone reproached him: "But we have all been through the ramble-on of your protagonists, so why impose it on us? Would there not be another way than to sit and stare at these birth pangs which are sharper than they need to be?" "I quite agree with you," Godard admitted quietly, proving that he had purposely done so. "Did you want to make the characters look absurd?" "To me, the characters are not absurd," declared Godard. "I was asked here if *La Chinoise* is about politics or children and I answered that it is about children who want to learn about politics. Since they are new-born babies, it takes them two or three years before learning how to talk." The opponents went on, "But your film has nothing to do with China!" Godard, familiar with an objection already raised by pro-Chinese Communists in France, defended his intentions. "*La Chinoise* is mainly about French youth. For three or four years, I had wanted to make a film on a specific kind of youth, the students, the youth of knowledge. Little by little the events of China became important and the Cultural Revolution was the spark which triggered *La Chinoise*. So it is also about Communist youth."

His challengers couldn't quite grasp the nature of the protagonists with whom they were nevertheless trying to identify. "Are they actors who have decided to make a film about revolutionaries or are they authentic revolutionaries themselves?" Godard's answer did not satisfy them: "If that situation had happened to them, this is the way they would have acted it out in life. You can see this truth in the film."

On this subject, Godard had another revelation to make: "You had a preconceived idea of what a political movie should be, and your difficulties stem from the false idea you have that people on a screen are made of flesh and blood. Whereas what you see are shadows and you reproach these shadows for not being alive. What is alive is not what's on the screen but *what is between you and the screen*."

I thought that humour and paradox were a barrier between Godard and the activists of Berkeley. On one side there are the playful French Maoists of Godard, sleeping together to the background of the 'Internationale' and practising calisthenics by rhythmically following the recitation of Chairman Mao's precepts; and on the other, the straight and serious-minded Americans who are caught in the system they are fighting. But I was wrong. In fact, both Godard and the students have made the move from tenderness to violence, from passivity to action, but each in a different way. The differences lay in their respective definitions of the tools to bring about revolutionary changes: for the hard-core radicals the rifle, and for Godard the cinema. Godard's practical engagement consists at most of "supporting the ones who are taking up guns."

This is why they could not agree on practical questions, such as "Would you take a year off to become a worker at the Rhodiaceta factory?" or "Why don't you work with the Cubans?" To which Godard replied that he would gladly "Take time off to shoot a film about the Rhodiaceta factory" and that he did not think he "Would make a more revolutionary film in Cuba than in France, revolution being international and not national." The extremists even objected to the 'commercialism' of Godard's tour, and a militant actor, a sort of American Guillaume, implied that Godard should not talk in a 'non-revolutionary room', since the Berkeley campus is owned by the US government.

They indeed wanted Godard to leave his director's chair

and come with them to this summer's Democratic Convention in Chicago where they are organising, in their own words, "What will amount to, hopefully, the destruction of the United States as we know it." Godard calmly replied that the job required a newsreel man and not a 'poet or a novelist' like himself and that, being non-American, he could not do the real picture of Chicago, which would be to study the structure of this movement and not merely to record it. He quoted as an example his refusal to shoot the Bertrand Russell Tribunal, to which he felt he would have contributed nothing, except for the editing. But his opponents were not quite convinced. The militants no longer believe in the possible influence of art on the revolution or on the downfall of the United States. Godard, on the contrary, believes in it; he rejects the reactionary idea of the artist as the extraordinary person but condones art, which is for him a 'normal everyday activity.'

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After Berkeley, which had been a substantial four-day visit, Godard was to appear for one-night stands in eighteen more universities across the country, from Texas to Canada, Ohio to New York. But the Mid-Westerners were not really avid for aesthetic or political exchanges with the maker of *La Chinoise*. In Houston, Texas, Godard witnessed cowboy students picking up pieces of film as souvenirs while the print of *La Chinoise* was being damaged by incompetent projection. The day after, in Kansas, taking advantage of a short break in the schedule, Godard decided to leave for France "for a two-day visit" from which he never returned (but for a one-day appearance at New York University and at the commercial opening of *La Chinoise* in New York). Out of the twenty campuses on the programme, Godard had visited a total of six: the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, Berkeley, the University of Texas, St. Thomas in Houston, the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas, and New York University. It was at this point of the tour that he must have felt he had nothing to gain and nothing to give any more.

He had expressed the desire to meet students, future film-makers, black militants. He did meet the students who, except at Berkeley, asked the wrong questions and mobbed him with the wrong gestures appropriate for a star. He did go to a 'Huey P. Newton Rally' in Oakland and he met black militants; but one, the wife of the Black Panther Party Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver, told him point blank "The Black Revolution is the first revolution in history," and Godard, a Frenchman who knows a bit about history, could not quite agree with that. He met future film-makers, but they were interested in the type of film stock he had used at the end of *Alphaville* or the position of the mikes in the various interviews in his films.

At Berkeley there was goodwill at the beginning on both sides. Godard went from seminar to seminar, from panel to panel, without minding them too much. The students surrounded him with warmth and respect in public discussions and in informal reunions at the campus cafeteria. But as time went by, a certain gap developed and Godard's alienation grew wider and wider. What happened the first night of his arrival at Berkeley might perhaps illustrate the fact that this visit was doomed by a basic malaise. To the avid crowd who had been stomping and shouting "We-Want-God-Ard! We-Want-God-Ard!" interrupting the projection of underground shorts which were to launch the discussion, Godard said: "I have nothing special to say, I'm not a President or a dictator." They were demanding and he was on the defensive for fear of being milked of his substance. When he had to defend his attackable position in *Far from Vietnam*, Godard apologised for being far away from it and explained that the only thing he could do was to say so. The result of his US tour is that now—even though in a different way—he is not only far from Vietnam but also far from America. We can be sure he will say that in one of his next films.

Photographs by Beth Bagby (page 110, Godard with Kathleen Cleaver), Jeffrey Blankfort (page 113, outside Alameda County Court House), and Gerhard E. Gscheidle (photographs of Godard at Berkeley).

CANNES 68



"LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE".

THE FATEFUL PRESS CONFERENCE at 11 o'clock on Saturday, May 18th, which effectively closed the 21st Cannes Festival, caught everyone unprepared. In retrospect, however, it should have been possible to foresee that something extraordinary was likely to happen at this year's festival. People who argue—some like to—that the Cinémathèque affair sparked off not only the Cannes débâcle but also the entire revolutionary upheaval are clearly talking through their French hats. But they have some vestige of logic on their side. The people who went to the barricades in February for Henri Langlois were the same—or at least the same kind of people—as those who tore up the paving-stones outside the Sorbonne in May. The unprecedented political as well as emotional concern over the Langlois case ("un épisode du grand conflit ouvert entre la démocratie et la technocratie administrative"—Pierre Mendès-France) was a pointer, for those who cared to look. And although the Cinémathèque supporters by no means won an unqualified victory, they drove the government a considerable way back from what had looked like an entrenched position. The notion of power is partly based on bluff: a really clamorous and organised public shindy can still call it.

Even a fairly cursory reading of the mass of documentation surrounding *l'affaire* Langlois leaves one clear impression: the stern resentments of some young French film-makers against the Centre Nationale du Cinéma. The Centre Nationale has no English equivalent, combining functions here spread around the Board of Trade, NFFC and others. Centralisation makes it a clear target; and it might have been guessed that at Cannes, in conditions of maximum publicity, some opportunity would be taken to push the Cinémathèque affair a stage further. That, at least, *looked* to be the objective of the press conference. With most French papers on strike, and only rumours from Paris, we weren't aware, as we innocently filed in, that what would now be raised was the great billowing banner of *solidarité*.

Resnais, who should have presided over the conference, had been held up en route. It was Truffaut and Godard, flanked by Claude Lelouch and Claude Berri from the new wave's successors, who called for an immediate halt to the festival, on grounds of solidarity with workers and students, and general inappropriateness at a time of crisis. The French contingent were on hand to withdraw their films; and one sympathised with Dominique Delouche's wistfulness at seeing his first, long-planned feature, *Vingt-Quatre Heures de la Vie d'une Femme*, go by the board. Three jurors present, Roman Polanski, Monica Vitti and Louis Malle, promptly announced their resignations. Other film-makers got up to regret that since their films weren't in competition they couldn't effectively withdraw them, but to register agreement with everyone else. (In fact, it remained arguable whether a film-maker could, off his own bat, withdraw his picture, a prerogative seemingly reserved for national delegations.) Godard dreamily suggested that the festival should move out of the Palais into the town cinemas, where round-the-clock screenings should be free to workers and students (and critics?). Polanski, shrugging his way off and on the platform with inspired theatricality, got into a tussle with Godard about who was or wasn't a Stalinist.

Apart from this tiny dust-up, the organisers seemed to have this first meeting under fairly tight control; and from this moment, effectively, the competitive side of the festival was stone dead. The rest of this interminable day was almost a mopping-up operation, endless haggings and wranglings between the adamant festival-stoppers and those who had come a long way to see and show films, and weren't going to let a little thing like a revolution stop them. Incidents of May 18th are clearly going to pass into festival folklore: the large, lolling audience, everyone plainly delighted at being able to rush unimpeded through the sacred doors labelled 'Jury'; the occasional knock-down scuffle (Truffaut down again, for the fifth time since February); the gallant attempt



"REPORT ON THE PARTY AND THE GUESTS".

of the organisers actually to get *Peppermint Frappé* under way, with people jumping up and down in front of the screen and clinging to the curtains.

All in all, those who wanted screenings to continue fought a bold rearguard action; and by evening, it was said, Cannes hoteliers were infiltrating the 'technicians' meeting, thinly disguised, to fight in the last ditch to keep their tourists. But from almost the first moment of the first meeting, it had been apparent that even if those who resolutely wanted to shut everything down were probably a minority, they would win the day. In the bedlam atmosphere of arguments and solidarity declarations, it was clear that someone could be counted on to picket or interrupt any effort at a projection.

Even without the background of anti-bureaucratic feeling and the *affaire* Langlois, it would have been extraordinary if the festival had managed to carry on. It would have been swallowed up in any case, perhaps only a day or so later, in the general chaos. But the manner of its destruction could cast doubts on its future, if one tots up the possible resentments of companies who committed themselves to lavish expenditure without even getting a film on the screen.

In fact, the battle of Cannes was between the idea of an international occasion, still despite its limitations of enormous value to world exchange of films, and the overriding determination that the cinema could not and should not stand apart from what was going on elsewhere in France. *Solidarité* began the day; *solidarité* brought Milos Forman, Dick Lester, Carlos Saura out to withdraw their films. For the record, it would seem that the Russians did not try to withdraw *Anna Karenina*; and that Mike Sarne, the only director of a British entry then present, did not try to withdraw *Joanna*.

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There were also, of course, films . . . days between Monday's one-day strike and Saturday's smash-up when, though rather muted and with several hesitant glances over its shoulder, the festival was behaving like a festival. Ironically, with politics so overwhelmingly in the air, it was the politically orientated films of Eastern Europe, the disenchanted cinema from *after* the revolution, which left by far the strongest impression.

Jan Nemeč's *Report on the Party and the Guests* is the hard stuff of political allegory: a diamond-bright film, built with effortless functionalism around an idea. A group of chirpy picnickers wander through a summer wood, are set upon by men who subject them to tiny, pointless humiliations, then are rescued by their host, an urbane gentleman with a Lenin beard, who conveys them to his magnificent alfresco birthday party. Candles burn on long tables: the effect is of a great outdoor banqueting hall. A woman discovers that she is sitting in someone else's place, and everyone shuffles awkwardly around; a man deserts the party. Petulantly, the host complains. Don't they know how to be happy, why are they

spoiling his party, hasn't he done enough for them? The film ends with the snuffing out of the candles, and dogs baying through darkening woods after the delinquent guest.

One can see why the previous Czech regime was wary about this film—the barely veiled satire, the rigmarole of rules and conformities and peevish paternalism, with the sinister only waiting to break through. It is a brilliant film, all glittering facets, but one's reservation is that it *essentially* works as allegory. Take away the pleasures of decoding, and the details and characters in themselves, the picture's flesh and blood, become less than engrossing. With Milos Forman's *Like a House on Fire*, the situation is reversed: every detail fascinates, and although there's a strong temptation to read this, too, as allegory, it works just as well as a self-contained anecdote.

The scene is a provincial firemen's ball, and the atmosphere one of self-righteousness, blundering goodwill and imminent catastrophe, the familiar chaos of the over-organised amateur occasion. One group roams the hall rounding up plain, bemused girls for the beauty queen competition; an elderly fireman keeps an obsessed eye on the vanishing tombola prizes. Halfway through the evening there is a real fire: no one knows how to cope, and the most helpful suggestion is that the victim, an old man rescued in his night-clothes, should be moved a little nearer the blazing ruins of his home, so that he won't catch cold. The beauty queens run amok; all the prizes are stolen; an aged fireman, patiently waiting for his ceremonial presentation, finally gets it—a pompous speech and an empty box—and receives this, the only tribute he expected, with a wonderful, wondering smile.

No director has a more fondly disillusioned eye for human folly, and *Like a House on Fire* is full of incidents of entrancing silliness. I particularly liked a monumental row between the guardian of the prizes (a kind of Czech John Le Mesurier) and a small, irate fireman anchored to a ladder; and the moment when the committee, closeted with their improbable beauty queens, contemplate the awful necessity of organising some kind of contest. But the comedy is ruthless about greed, conformism, tiny status battles, and the cruel inroads of age: a very winning film, and yet a work of stringent severity.

Miklos Jancso's *The Red and the White* must be the strangest of all the commemorative tributes to the Russian revolution. A Russo-Hungarian production, its setting is the Civil War of 1918; and although, admittedly, the reds come off fractionally better, Jancso's theme is the whole deadening futility of the conflict, the chessboard game between knights and pawns distinguishable only by their colours. As in *The Round-Up*, the feeling is of utter isolation, the mystification of insane orders and manoeuvres, the sudden, sickening realisation that all the pieces are being swept off the board and the game must start again. At one moment, a red officer is searching crumbling cloisters for a missing sentry. Suddenly, almost stoically, he takes off his gun-belt. It is a moment of total fatalism, achieved with a single gesture: far more ominous than if Jancso had actually shown us the white soldiers now back in possession. He is not afraid of staggeringly romantic and doom-laden effects, like the extraordinary scene in which a party of nurses are taken out to dance for their captors in the birch woods, or the advance of a handful of reds singing the 'Marseillaise' upon a theatrical array of white cavalry. Part of the film's excitement derives, undeniably, from watching a director repeatedly going so near the cliff-edge of mannerism. Can he pull it off this time? Brilliantly, he can; and for my money this was the Cannes 1968 winner.

Elsewhere, there wasn't much to shout about. The Italians showed a film of crushing pretension in Valerio Zurlini's *Seduto alla sua Destra*, with Woody Strode as a black Christ in the Congo and Franco Citti as the thief who shares his cell, tends his wounds, and eventually dies with him. Much finger-smashing and screaming; and a glutinous religiosity behind it all. The Japanese were below their usual festival form with Kaneto Shindo's *Kuroneko*, a laboured piece about a murdered mother and daughter who take spectral vengeance on any samurai luckless enough to cross their path. One or two good ideas—the ladies transformed into cats, or turning ghostly somersaults over their victims. But Mizoguchi and Kobayashi have shown us what Japanese ghost stories can

look like. And the three-decker film of adaptations from Poe, *Histoires Extraordinaires*, promised a good deal more than it managed to deliver. Vadim turns his story into decadent pantomime, with Jane Fonda looking more like principal boy than wanton countess; Malle does respectably by 'William Wilson', hinged on an intense card-game between Alain Delon and Brigitte Bardot; and Fellini, up-dating his story to 1960s Cinecittà, plunges a quiescent Terence Stamp into dreamlike parties and wild car rides. The fantasies (and just occasionally the jokes) of 8½ linger remorselessly on.

Conceivably, however, the Italians have found a new director in 24-year-old Salvatore Samperi, maker of *Grazie Zia*, in which Lou Castel plays a wayward rich boy whose anti-social protest takes the form of faking paralysis and confining himself to a wheel-chair. Packed off to stay with his doctor aunt, he slowly draws her into his dangerous private network of games, fantasies and encroaching mania. The film is perverse, elegant, secretive and blackly witty. Heavily influenced (Antonioni, Bertolucci, above all *Fists in the Pocket*), but promising enough to leave one feeling that one would like to meet its director again on less derivative ground.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

STRANGELY ENOUGH, EVEN AFTER the Cannes Festival was officially pronounced at an end, screenings continued for a few days in the Marché du Film—the commercial screenings held in the cinemas of the town. There was some anxious consultation among the remaining journalists as to whether attendance at these shows could be construed as anti-revolutionary strike-breaking; but we all decided, conveniently, that it could not.

It would have been highly satisfying to be able to report that we saw several masterpieces as a reward for our bravery, or persistence, or what was perhaps after all only a combination of curiosity and a reluctance to change our plans. But we didn't. On the other hand, Jorn Donner's newest film *Black on White* (naturally filmed in coolly stunning colour) was his best since *To Love*, and maybe potentially even better than that. No Harriet Andersson, but in what turned out to be recompense, Mr. Donner himself as the star, playing a Finnish businessman caught between wife and secretary. A consciously banal choice of subject matter, but it seemed to me to work most of the way—until it bogged down in an over-long office party scene. I still think he is one of the most talented directors around, if only his packaging could be improved. This is not as impertinent as it sounds, for it seems that Donner can never resist taking any subject, situation, or even formal procedure just a little further than he ought, or beyond what it will really bear.

On another night, we had the first film by Stig Björkman, Swedish film critic: script by Björkman and Jonas Cornell. As Agnetta Ekmanner (*Hugs and Kisses*) plays the second lead, it is difficult to resist the temptation to compare *I Love, You Love* (and not *Je t'aime, je t'aime*: unfortunate coincidence in titling between this and the Resnais film) with Cornell's picture. I am afraid that it doesn't quite measure up; and one is tempted, perhaps unfairly, to attribute to Cornell some of the most successful bits of the script. Björkman doesn't seem to have a tight enough control yet; for example, his somewhat self-indulgent inclusion of a 'French' film-within-the-film, simply because Godard had a 'Swedish' one in *Masculin Féminin*, quite obviously doesn't come off at all, and might well have been axed. On the other hand, his treatment of some of the more intimate sequences is promising.

One of the nicest, most beautiful Swedish films is Kjell Grede's *Hugo and Josefin*. This is supposed to be a children's film, and I suppose that is nominally correct, but it seemed to me more like a pre-pubescent *Elvira Madigan*: fantastically summery photography, a real sense of joy, and at the same time the poignancy of something which must, by its very nature, soon come to an end. The story is extremely simple, even evanescent, but perfect. As James would have said, the director has woven himself an exquisite Persian carpet, and he stands, beautifully, on it.



"GRAZIE ZIA": LISA GASTONI, LOU CASTEL.

Just before the festival ground to a halt, a fascinating new French film was shown, semi-privately: it may turn up at some other festival, but then again it may not, so it seems worth recording that in his second film Jean-Daniel Simon has made a considerable splash. *Adelaide* is an up-dated adaptation of a short story by Gobineau: Ingrid Thulin and a bright new discovery, Sylvie Fennec, play a mother and daughter in Normandy who are both in love with the same man, the much put-upon Jean Sorel. Back and forth he is pushed from one to the other, becoming in the process more and more of an abject object. About two-thirds of the way through, the plot goes excitingly off the rails: an edgy *folie à deux* becomes—logically, if not naturalistically—a really terrifying *folie à trois* as Sorel is finally, and willingly, trapped in the Atridian relationship of mother and daughter.

Of course, the real star was Harlow. He/she was the hero/heroine of Frank Simon's documentary *The Queen*, which was shown in the otherwise disappointing Semaine de la Critique. (If only Straub's *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* had been scheduled before the strike: still, it seems it will now go to Venice.) Anyhow, *The Queen*, as its title may or may not suggest, is about a contest held annually in New York to determine the most beautiful transvestite of the year. In technique it seldom rises above *cinéma vérité*, but the material is fascinating, and somehow the presence at Cannes of Harlow made it seem better than it was. And what more fitting for this most surrealist of festivals than to have had a man as its Queen?

RICHARD ROUD

"HUGO AND JOSEFIN".



A SAMURAI IN PARIS



Rui Nogueira and François Truchaud

JEAN-PIERRE MELVILLE, 50 years old, 10 films since 1947, is the only director in the world to possess his own studios (they have burned down—but no matter, they can be rebuilt). Ever since his first film, *Le Silence de la Mer*, Melville has asserted his independence of the French industry and its product. He is his own producer, for he likes to be 'responsible for his own mistakes'. And his isolation, which he cultivates as much from pride as from humility, enables him to view himself, as well as other people, with shrewd appraisal.

Jean-Pierre Melville, you have said that all your films to date were merely rough drafts. Is this also true of LE SAMOURAI?

Certainly. I'm incapable of doing anything but rough drafts. Each time I see one of my films again, then and only then can I see what I should have done. But I only see things this clearly once the finished print is being shown on the screen everywhere and it's too late to do anything about it. I have never been satisfied by my films, never...

You have often been described as 'an American director', sometimes with implied criticism. How do you feel about this?

I have been tidied away once and for all in a drawer, in a sort of filing cabinet under the label 'American'. This is quite wrong. I've put up with it for five years, but now I've had enough: I am absolutely *not* an American director. If by this people mean that I make my films with enormous care, leaving nothing to chance, my answer is that the great Japanese directors work the same way. Anyway, I feel much more Japanese than American. *Le Samourai* is a Japanese film, as the title suggests.

The most important quality needed by a film director—or as I prefer to say, a film creator [*un créateur de cinéma*—is the ability not to work through his intellect, otherwise he ceases to create a spectacle. He must also have a feeling for observation, memory, psychology, and a fantastically acute sense of sight and sound. He must have the instinct of a showman. A film is a spectacle, just like the circus or the music-hall; when it's well done, it becomes a work of art. But the cinema as a whole is not an art yet—it's going to become one. It is no accident that every writer I meet envies me my profession. Today, the cinema is the ideal form of literary creation, and young people no longer have a literary culture but a filmic one. This is something that would have seemed impossible fifteen years ago.

Melville slips into his black raincoat, puts on his huge stetson, and leads us to his Chevrolet. He looks exactly like one of his own heroes—or more accurately, his heroes look exactly like him.

All your heroes wear a sort of uniform: hat, raincoat, etc.

I think the virile hero needs a horse, boots and saddle. As you've probably noticed, they're not exactly common on the streets of Paris, but at least you can give him a hat, a raincoat, with a belt and a collar that can be turned up, and a button to do up when it rains. It's a man's get-up, an echo both of the Western and of military uniform. And there are the guns too, it all springs from the barrack-room. Men are soldiers, women may be by accident... Between the ages of 12 and 14 I was both formed and deformed to a great extent by the first American gangster novels. So I'd be quite happy to have you say I make gangster films, inspired by the gangster novels, but I don't make American films, even though I like the American *films noirs* better than anything.

L'AINE DES FERCHAUX is a dream of America rather than America itself?

Of course. Starting from one of Simenon's novels, I presented a particular aspect of America that I'm rather fond of. The Americans, I might point out, decided I was very anti-American, certainly a Communist. Not that that matters. I'm very fond of America. What would be really great would be if there was no one living in it, nothing there. Because of course no one could possibly replace the Americans. The country would be like a vast museum where you could just wander around. When I made *Deux Hommes à Manhattan* I was writing a love letter to New York, and my story takes place at night because that is the time for writing love letters. Any story set in a big city should start at about six in the evening and end with the dawn.

Your heroes never grow old. Even when adult, they remain essentially adolescent...

That's my own particular hang-up. I think I'm still eighteen years old. Outwardly, of course, I behave like a sensible gentleman of fifty, but inside I'm still eighteen, I haven't changed. I think that is man's special prerogative. Moreover, my studios on the rue Jenner (which I'm going to have rebuilt) are an adolescent dream.

You are often reproached for the improbability of your heroes, who are very easy to recognise...

It's because I don't want to situate my heroes in time, I don't want the action of a film to be recognisable as something that happens in 1968. That's why in *Le Samourai*, for example, the women aren't wearing mini-skirts while the men are wearing hats—something, unfortunately, that no one does any more. I'm not interested in realism. All my films hinge on the fantastic. I'm not a documentarist: a film is first and foremost a dream, and it's absurd to copy life in an attempt to produce an exact re-creation of it. Transposition is more or less a reflex with me; I move from realism to fantasy without the spectator even noticing.

Le Samourai describes several parallel worlds which never overlap but merely brush against each other from time to time—the Delon and Péri characters in particular. Péri is a logical character, very Cartesian, very French; Delon is a mystery, a complete enigma. We don't know who Delon is, what he used to do, where he came from, how and why he has become a hired killer. This was deliberate on my part, because I can't stand the sort of film which tries to place a character by having him announce "I was with the army in Indochina and later in Algeria, I used to kill for the Government's profit and now I'm killing for myself," etc.

From LES ENFANTS TERRIBLES right up to LE SAMOURAI, there's a certain affinity between your work and Cocteau's.

Jean Cocteau was one of the greatest writers France has produced in the last fifty years. You have only to read or re-read his plays, poems, novels and essays to be convinced of that. He unquestionably had a formative influence on several generations and on mine in particular, because in 1931, when *Les Enfants Terribles* was first published, I was a pupil at the Lycée Condorcet and I used to pass the 'cité Montier' four times a day. That was how I discovered Cocteau's universe. My films are different from his, but there is undeniably a certain intellectual affinity between us. That's probably why he asked me to make *Les Enfants Terribles*. We had a lot of tastes in common.

I adore the beginning of *Orphée*, it's wonderful, quite fantastic. The second part isn't good, for reasons that I'd rather not go into, although it does have some very fine things in it: the tribunal, the passage from life to death through the mirror, and so on. Casarès had the best role of her career in it and Péri was brilliant. As soon as I saw him in *Orphée*, I was determined to have him in one of my films.

You've made three films with Belmondo (LEON MORIN, PRETRE, LE DOULOS and L'AINE DES FERCHAUX) and, up till now, only one with Delon. What do you think of these two?

They're the only two *jeunes premiers* in the French cinema. So I'm forced to make comparisons, but what I say in favour of one doesn't imply any criticism of the other. Belmondo can play parts that Delon would be incapable of playing, and vice versa. They complement one another quite admirably. I





"LE SAMOURAI": ALAIN DELON, FRANÇOIS PERIER.

wrote *Le Samourai* for Delon, with him in mind and inspired by him. Of course, if I were to write an original screenplay for Belmondo, Delon could not possibly play it. Belmondo is remarkable in *Léon Morin, Prêtre*, and Delon in *Le Samourai*. Neither of them could possibly replace the other. The two films are about the same character played by very different actors. Delon is a remarkable actor, and remarkably professional.

I don't like characters to be explained through a few 'tics', although Delon copied two of mine for *Le Samourai*—the gesture of running two fingers over the brim of his hat, and the way of wearing his watch on his right wrist with the dial turned in. Similarly, I didn't want to be explicit about the relationship between Delon and Nathalie. It's of no interest to know whether they are lovers or not. Their relationship has the same ambiguity as the one between Lino Ventura and Christine Fabrega in *Le Deuxième Souffle*. They could be brother and sister; it's the 'enfants terribles' side of Cocteau. Nathalie Delon is so like Elizabeth and Alain so much like Paul, it's extraordinary how alike they look.

In *LE DOULOS*, *LE DEUXIEME SOUFFLE* and *LE SAMOURAI* one finds the same recurring relationship between gangster and police chief: Belmondo, Ventura and Delon as the gangsters, Desailly, Meurisse and Périer as the policemen.

For me, the police chief is Destiny. That's how the character has to be, for he represents inescapable destiny: he doesn't personally execute the gangster, but he does set the machinery in motion. In the last scene of *Le Samourai*, Delon does not want to kill. He removes the bullets from his gun, then he goes back into the bar, into the trap which has been set for him, and he kills himself, he commits hara-kiri. From the outset, the black woman in white is the incarnation of Death, with all the charm that death can have. At one point in Cocteau's *Orphée*, Maria Casarès said "I should not mind being changed into a pillar of salt," and her black dress became white—and, for Cocteau, Casarès represented Death. The character of Jeff Costello (Alain Delon) in *Le Samourai* is in love with his own Death. In the first shot he's stretched out on his bed, already 'laid out', already dead at that moment, and everything follows.

After the success of *LE SAMOURAI*, you have several projects lined up, and right now you're preparing *LA CHIENNE*, a remake of Jean Renoir's 1931 film and of Fritz Lang's *SCARLET STREET* (1945).

It will not be a remake. There's an idea in the original book that interests me, and that's all. The film I shall probably make from *La Chienne* will be nothing like the novel and still less like the films by Renoir and Lang. Both these films were made from an adaptation written by Mouézy-Eon, and not from the original book by La Fourchardière. (As you may know, because Mouézy-Eon acted as an intermediary in the sale of the rights to Braunberger and Richebé in 1931, his name has to appear on the credits of any film based on *La Chienne* by La Fourchardière.) I should very much like to do it with Lino Ventura. What interests me is the principle behind the original book which, in its introductory note, describes the characters as "He, she and the other, the eternal triangle." But my characters will be nothing like those in the novel. 'He' is an extremely timid person who opens the first chapter with the words "Tonight, something happened to me . . ." I shall keep this sentence in my film, but instead of continuing, "It's the first time in my life that anything has happened to me," he will say "Although God knows enough has happened to me already . . ." You see, I'm turning someone who's essentially a victim—like Professor Rath in *The Blue Angel*, for instance—into a man who's tough, who has been through it all, possibly an ex-gangster or a nightclub owner, I'm not sure. In any case, he will be the kind of man you can't easily imagine falling in love at first sight, or with an average sort of girl. What interests me is that 'he' narrates the first sequence, 'she' narrates the second sequence, 'the other' the third, and then the cycle starts all over again. Each character describes things from his own point of view—describing not the same scene, but the next one in sequence. That's how I envisage my version of *La Chienne*. If I don't start it right away, I may make a spy film from a novel called *The Packard Case*. If it comes off the way I hope, it will be the kind of film that should have been made from John Le Carré's excellent book *The Spy Who Came In From the Cold*. That's one remake

I'd be happy to do, for I found Martin Ritt's film really very bad and rather grotesque.

Jean-Pierre Melville is well established as the lone wolf of the French cinema. He works hard at it and likes to say that it isn't so easy to make an enemy a day. But solitude is not so hard when you know how to use it, reading or watching films. For Melville is an insatiable film addict and an indefatigable spectator. It's not unusual to find him at 5 o'clock in the morning, watching an American film either in his own home or with some equally fanatical friends.

I remember one day when I was in America making *L'Ainé des Ferchaux*. We'd been shooting all day and had driven for half the night before stopping at a roadside motel. As soon as I got to my room, I unplugged the Musak and switched on the television. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* came on, directed by Frank Capra, with James Stewart and Jean Arthur! It was two o'clock in the morning and I watched it. Needless to say I slept wonderfully afterwards. Next morning, I opened my window and saw an exquisite landscape: a tiny valley with a river, and a wood on the far side of it. It was raining. But the moment I opened the door, the rain stopped and brilliant sunlight shone on to the wood. I had such an overwhelming feeling of well-being and happiness that I moved a table over to the window and started to write a book, which I've never finished . . .

You once said "Writing is a real art." You did start to write a book of reflections entitled "Du Créateur du Cinéma", and also a novel.

Both are burned. I had already written about 300 pages of the novel, which would have been between 400 and 450 pages long. It started in 1941, in America of course, and ended during the Eisenhower regime; it was a study of five or six characters. I don't think I shall rewrite it, but I do intend to rewrite my book on the cinema.

You have said that you'd love to make a film in America—an American film—perhaps either a war film or a musical comedy?

Yes, I'd very much like to make a war film, but I can't make it out of my own experiences. That film would be censored and would never get through. It would have to be based on a script or a novel, on something 'invented', because I could never put in all the little incidents, all the things I saw. I could go on talking all night about them. I made *Le Silence de la Mer* because I was concerned with that sort of problem, but even there I had to stray a long way from the truth. Of course war is against an enemy, but it's within your own ranks as well. I'd like to deal with this sort of internal war in a book, which would be easier. Let me give you one or two examples: on August 19, 1944, on the outskirts of Toulon, five Germans came out of the forest with their hands up and started walking towards our 13.35, a light tank. They wanted to surrender. I was the only witness, which made it difficult when the top of the turret opened and an N.C.O. signalled the Germans to come closer. By the time I realised what was going to happen, it was too late: I was just about to call out to the Germans when the tank started moving and rolled right over them. Like an idiot I took out my revolver, then the N.C.O. closed the turret and turned his machine gun on me . . . A pleasant little wartime anecdote, isn't it? I could also tell you the true story of the 'Ciociara' . . . It wasn't really the Moroccan soldiers who had raped the Italian girls, if you get my meaning. Or there's the story of the N.C.O. who had a great time using his American rifle to pick off Italian peasants working in the fields. And so on . . .

On the other hand, I have some very moving memories. One day, I remember, I was near the surgical block. The surgeon was a woman, a slightly masculine woman who smoked dark tobacco. She was wearing a butcher's apron, all red, as she used it to wipe her hands on after each operation. Then she'd smoke a cigarette, and go back in to start operating again . . . It was pretty unusual anyway having a

woman surgeon in a unit so near the enemy lines. At one point, they brought out a young boy from my division and set him down with a blanket over him, and I saw he'd lost one of his legs. They put him down under an apple tree in blossom, it was springtime, and I could see that he was going to die. So I did something that I must have remembered from a film—you see how the cinema can haunt you?—I lit a cigarette and placed it between his lips. He looked at me for a second, took a couple of drags on it and died. Imagine the springtime in the Italian countryside—we were not very far from Florence, it was a sunny day, and there was this kid who died at the age of twenty. Reality has always been way ahead of the cinema and its war films: one can only make war films because incidents like this are true, or were true at a particular time.

Have you had many offers to film in America?

Yes, but I'm the French producer who turns down American contracts. I've refused fifty-four offers, as well as innumerable projects that never got anywhere. I've only made ten films so far, for since I'm not recognised by the industry—you were talking about my isolation a little while ago: since the age of 21 I've been shut up in a kind of strange ghetto, I'm not very sure why—I'm hesitant about signing an American contract because I don't want to be a director at the beck and call of an American company. But I wouldn't mind being my own producer in France, financed by an American firm.

I don't know if you've ever read an American contract, but it's terrifying, you're completely imprisoned by the small print. Take this clause for instance: "You hereby undertake that during the making and distribution of the film you will at no time conduct yourself, publicly or privately, in any manner which offends against decency or morality, or causes you to be held in public ridicule, scorn or contempt, or causes a public scandal; or which would be prejudicial to the film, theatre or television or radio industries in general. In the case of such conduct, the company may, prior to the completion of the work contracted, terminate the contract, without any further obligation of any kind . . ."

It isn't possible to work under such conditions. Suppose I sign a contract like that and start shooting, and for some reason or other the star decides he isn't satisfied with my work; so the company looks into my past and discovers that I was once a homosexual or a thief or a member of the Communist Party, and they can kick me out just like that. I think it's shaming to sign a contract like that and insulting to suggest that anyone should. If I sign anything, I want to impose my own conditions . . . I don't know what I shall do next, possibly a film with no stars, very low budget . . .

Is this just contrariness? Because right now you're in a position to ask for whatever you want.

Yes. I'm tempted to make a film with the kind of freedom you can only get with a technical crew reduced to a single operator and one or two other people. While I was shooting the tailing sequences in the *Métro* for *Le Samourai*, I remember inwardly cursing the person who'd written the script without considering the difficulties involved in shooting the scene—and then I remembered I'd written it myself. There was only one way to shoot it, with a hand-held camera and without any trickery. We shot it with just the ordinary lighting in the *Métro*, and it was very hard and very tiring. We had to get on a train, stay on for three or four stops, then get out and have the camera ready in the place where we knew Delon was going to appear in the doorway, be careful not to have a shadow hide his nose, and so on. It took us a full week of hard, crazy work. I was also the stills photographer, as well as doing all the sets, colours, etc.

The way you've used colours makes them all tend towards grey.

Yes, I've always liked that particular tonality. I think one always needs to cheat and choose—to make a colour film look like black and white. For instance, the bank notes at the beginning of the film are in black and white and not in colour; they're simply photocopies of bank notes, and if you look carefully you can see that the labels on the bottles of Evian water in Delon's room are black and grey, and not red, and so is the packet of Gauloises.



"LE SAMOURAI": NATHALIE DELON.

What do you think of the American cinema at the present time?

I like Arthur Penn very much, I've always said he was a man with a lot of talent. I've just seen *Bonnie and Clyde* and it's an unusually beautiful film, even though I don't much like the way the style changes from one sequence to the next. Two of the actors in it gave the most stunning performances I've ever seen—Michael J. Pollard as Moss, the young service station attendant, and Gene Wilder as one of the minor characters called Grizzard. As for Faye Dunaway, she really is very beautiful. Warren Beatty I preferred in *Mickey One*. But one shouldn't be too hard on him: he's capable of very pleasant surprises, as in *Lilith*, for instance, where he is superb. But then *Lilith* is a wonderful, a really remarkable film which I'd defend against all comers. One evening in New York at a reception in honour of Mastroianni, I suddenly noticed a little man with curly fair hair standing in the corner of an enormous room crammed full of celebrities. It was Robert Rossen. I went over to talk to him about his films. He was very surprised to discover that his work was known so well in France, and he asked who I was and what I did. When I said that, like him, I made films, he looked even more surprised. He wanted to know what I had made and I began by mentioning *Le Silence de la Mer*. He'd never seen it. Then, when I started to talk about *Les Enfants Terribles*, he burst out, "I've seen it, I've seen it several times . . . but you didn't make it, Cocteau did!"

Romain Gary and Jean Seberg told me that when he was making *Lilith*, Rossen developed a kind of stigmata. The blood kept penetrating his skin—a completely unknown disease which irresistibly recalled the stigmata of the Catholic religion. His shirt was always stained with blood. Of course I didn't know this at the time, but when I saw *Lilith* I said to my wife, "We've just seen Robert Rossen's last film. When a man achieves that degree of perfection, he has to die. As Becker did after *Le Trou*." And now he's dead.

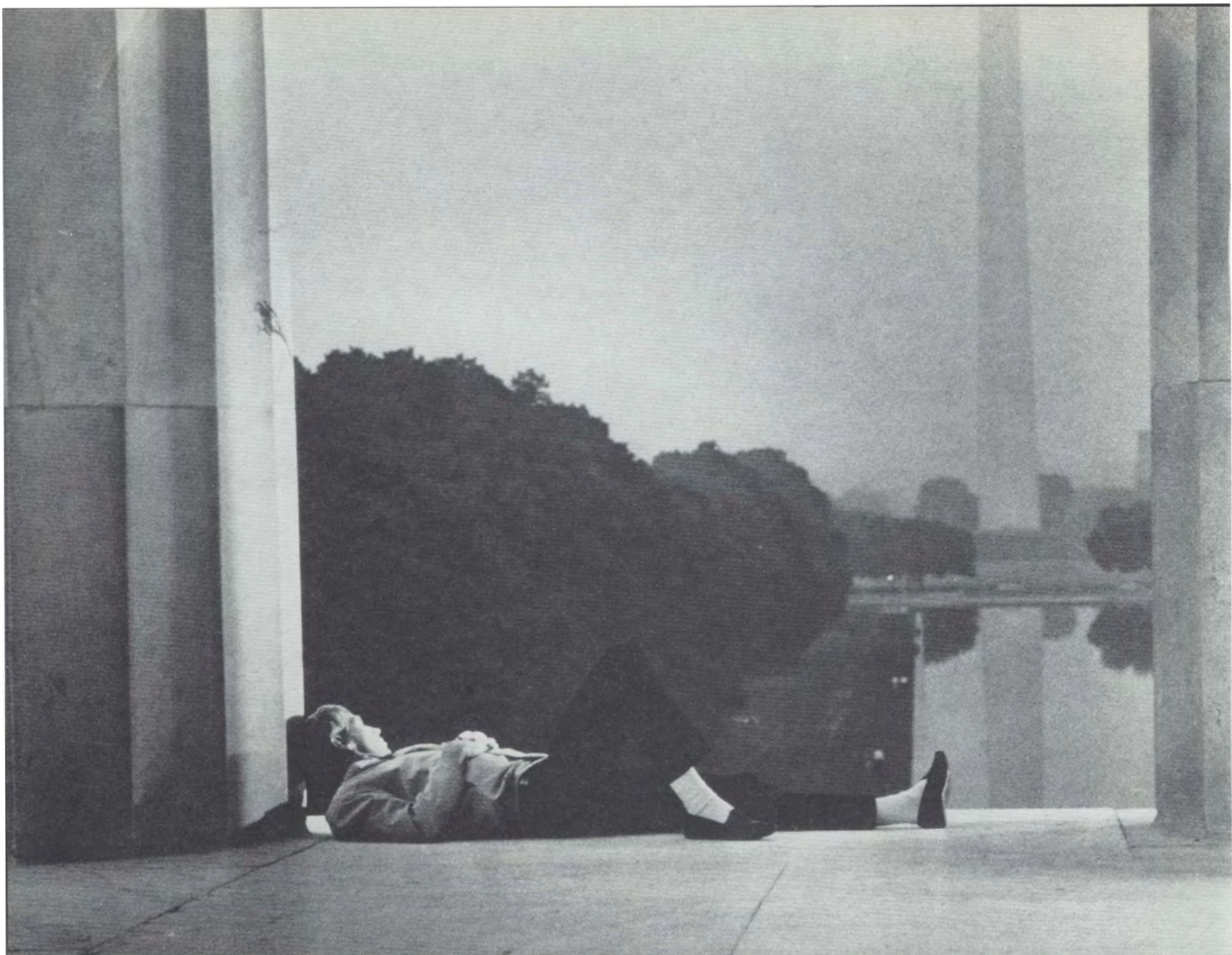
When I told Lino Ventura that Rossen was a little old man over sixty years old, he just couldn't believe it. "What? The man who made *The Hustler*?" He was right, of course: *The Hustler* was the work of a thirty-year-old.

Do you think you will make any more 'detective' films?

Yes, of course. I'd like to make a film lasting three hours with an interval for the sale of ice-creams, because that's what keeps the cinema going. The first part would tell the gangsters' story. You might think it was over, but the second part would start with a policeman arriving and the story would begin all over again.

I should also like to make a film with Jean Gabin and Lino Ventura. For me, Gabin is one of the finest actors in the French cinema and I'd be delighted if he'd agree to work with me. I'll tell you just the beginning of the film I want to make. I would start from a basic police situation, and turn it into a Kafkaesque one. I've already written the story, very succinctly. Lino Ventura is appointed director of the Police Judiciaire and he takes over his new office. You know that the head of the P.J. doesn't necessarily have to be a policeman, he's a kind of high-grade administrator. Well, he starts the job on a Monday morning. The Prefect of Police phones him and says, "Please come to my office, it's just across the Boulevard du Palais, there's someone I'd like you to meet." Ventura leaves his office, crosses the Boulevard du Palais, gets to the office of the Prefect, and is introduced to Gabin, who's the 'Inspecteur Général de Service', a kind of police controller, the police force of the police force. It's a branch of the service few people know about—not secret, but since it's reserved exclusively for policemen, we the uninitiated never hear about it.

In the course of the conversation—which is not without its philosophical pretensions—Ventura says, "I think there are more innocent people than guilty." Gabin replies, "That just shows you have no police experience. You'll learn that there are only the guilty. It's not that there are more guilty than innocent, or that no one is innocent: they are all guilty." Ventura says "You're joking, etc." The Prefect, who is a man of the world, joins in the conversation, which becomes very light and trivial, and so it ends. They exchange pleasantries and go their separate ways. The 'Inspecteur Général de Service' goes back to his office, calls his assistant and says to him, "Get me the dossier on the new director of the P.J." You can imagine the rest . . .



FISSION/FUSION/FISSION



“WHAT WE CALLED avant-garde has become fashionable,” Jean Cocteau reflected nearly two decades ago. Like the other arts, film is in the thick of the American Way again, booming with the culture booms and closing the gap between experiment and fashion. *Bonnie and Clyde* is a worldwide smash, *The Graduate* has them lining up for city blocks, and campus film clubs overflow. Everything is caught on celluloid, from the extremes of aesthetic radicalism and sublimated kookiness to solid entertainment fodder from before McLuhan. The no-longer-underground is seeping into the visual vocabulary—makers of TV commercials regularly ransack avant-garde films for ideas—and lonely wolves are more than nipping at Hollywood’s heels. American and overseas moviegoers have caught the underground show and Andy Warhol is better known in Stockholm and Kansas City than Mark Robson. It is no longer possible to ignore the revolutionary cinema (ex-underground), but there is no reason to puff up this marginal attempt at new things or to think that the guerrillas of Lower Manhattan will derail the Hollywood gravy train. The most probable outcome is a cross-fertilisation which may again bring American cinema way out in the forefront—perhaps far beyond the Byzantine aesthetics of the Bergmans, Antonionis and Fellinis.

Depending on one’s particular prejudice, Hollywood in 1968 is either decaying or trying harder. In hard economic parlance, there may be no Hollywood tomorrow. The motion picture industry is fighting a downhill battle against its own greed and, as Jerry Lewis says, “the unions may yet bury us.” It used to be a case of Hollywood reaching out to acquire the talents of the world, but today in film-making the world is reaching out to use the financial resources of the American industry. With both money and artistry talking loud and clear in favour of overseas filming, the Los Angeles suburb is threatened with extinction, and both labour and talent are digging their own graves.

Hollywood is aware of new winds blowing. However shocking it may seem to would-be film-makers still out in the cold, the power structure has nothing against *auteurs*. With perfect cost-effectiveness thinking, the studios wouldn’t mind ‘contracting out’ to headstrong directors, giving them x-million dollars and then waiting for them to return with a finished product. The Big Time independents, the Aldriches, Wises, Premingers and Kramers, already live under this regime. But they are, in a sense, yesterday, makers of a ‘safe’, almost ritual cinema

based on the time-honoured values of best-seller source material, star-studded casts and ‘production values’. In this already somewhat obsolete cinema, the subject is chosen for its efficacy, whereas in the New Cinema the subject is becoming an aesthetic rather than a literary choice.

What separates Hollywood from European cinema, and constantly widens the Atlantic, is the American myth of the mechanical age that a good film is first of all a film which exhausts all its possibilities. Yet in the arts we live in Nietzschean times, the era of the charm of imperfection, where creators beguile more with what they hint at than with what they achieve. The lack of personal point of view that efficacy implies used to be the strength of American films; today this virtue seems to be a barrier to the future.

Scratch a European film-maker and under the surface you will find a former critic or would-be writer. Scratch an American undergrounder and you will find a former painter. At their best, U.S. experimental films are—to use François Truffaut’s division—heirs to Méliès, with their ‘expanded cinema’ and ‘mixed media environments’, in which movies, theatre, recorded music, kinetic sculpture and light painting are fused into a single engulfing experience. After seventy years of the Lumière tradition, a renaissance of Méliès may be salutary. But where will the native Godard come from?

The irrevocable march of time has retired the last of the Hollywood ‘czars’, and the new men at the top are not too cautious dice-rollers who really wouldn’t mind seeing an American Godard walking through the studio gates. The chances are good that they might recognise him. Prudent people (and who isn’t prudent when it is a matter of risking big money on a newcomer, and without government subsidy?) have believed that he would come from television. After a good fifteen years of TV, however, we must admit that the 21-inch universe has given us no Fellinis. The only cineaste of major dimension to graduate from the tube is John Frankenheimer, now 37, and even he looks somewhat dated as the cinematic light-years zoom by. The list of TV mutants is a good thirty names long, all articulate and clever directors, now mostly in their forties, but none of them touched by any ‘gratia cinematographica’. Originality is not their strong point, and when they break through, like Norman Jewison, they become makers of a certain *cinéma de papa*.

New chances are nevertheless being taken with new men. Francis Ford Coppola, who is not yet 29, is making *The Rain People* for Warner Brothers-Seven Arts, hard on the heels of his *Finian’s Rainbow*. The first Negro director is starting an autobiographical

film, also for W7. For 20th Century-Fox, Noel Black, aged 32, has made *Pretty Poison*; Theodore Flicker, 37, has made *The President’s Analyst* for Paramount; and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer imported Gordon Flemyng from the BBC to do *The Split*.

Finian’s Rainbow is Coppola’s third feature, following the shoestring-budget *Dementia 13* and the New York-located *You’re a Big Boy Now*, and the trade grapevine has it that W7 now regrets not having put more money into *Finian*. The portly UCLA cinema graduate is well advanced on *The Rain People*, an unusual film in the sense that Coppola and cast—Shirley Knight, James Caan and Rip Torn—are shooting it from New York to Los Angeles, living in caravans and stopping when they feel like it to film the loose-limbed story of a girl driving cross-country with a hitch-hiker.

A week before the Martin Luther King tragedy, W7 signed Gordon Parks, the first Negro to direct a feature, to film his novel *The Learning Tree*. Parks, in his early forties, is a former *Life* Magazine photographer and TV documentary film-maker. *The Learning Tree* has been translated into nine languages, and he will start filming it in his native Fort Scott, Kansas, in August. His son, David, is also a writer, the author of a Vietnam war novel, *G.I. Diary*. Parks, whose best-known documentary is *Choice of Weapons*, is now looking for a 15-year-old Negro boy for the lead.

Of other newcomers, Noel Black got his assignment on the strength of *Skater Dater*, a 15-minute arabesque on adolescence. His *Pretty Poison*, starring Anthony Perkins and Tuesday Weld, is what he calls “a teenage Lady Macbeth” crime story. Theodore Flicker, who made a film called *The Troublemaker* back in 1964, represents a case of the screenwriter who insisted on directing his own material and met a star willing to back him up. The bearded New Yorker met James Coburn at a party, got talking shop, and had Coburn read his script. Three days later, *The President’s Analyst*—a vastly underrated, subversive film—was packaged and ready to go.

And there are other examples. One is Larry Pearce’s *The Incident*, started in New York with money from outside the industry which ran out after a week’s shooting. Practically on a telephone call from Richard Zanuck, Fox took over and let the author of *One Potato, Two Potato* finish his second feature. Also working again is Sam Peckinpah, now aged 41, and in Mexico shooting *The Wild Bunch*, his first feature since *Major Dundee*.

Spectacular breakthroughs of course include Mike Nichols, 34, who after *The Graduate* can do no wrong, and Arthur Penn, 46, whose *Bonnie and Clyde* is actually his first success (and only his fifth film). Universal, whose London farm has produced a string of somewhat risky adventures since Truffaut’s *Fahrenheit 451*, has had less

LEFT, ABOVE: JAMES COBURN IN “THE PRESIDENT’S ANALYST”. LEFT: TUESDAY WELD AND ANTHONY PERKINS IN “PRETTY POISON”. FRED ASTAIRE IN “FINIAN’S RAINBOW”.

luck with homegrown new talents. *Games*, the second feature (after *Night Tide*) of 38-year-old Curtis Harrington, was unsuccessful, and announcements of a 'nouvelle vague maison' have remained just that—though Universal claims to have a winner with the musical *Sweet Charity*, the first film of stage director and choreographer Bob Fosse.

The new studio bosses at Fox, Paramount and W7 are all under forty, and as *Time* put it, "Hollywood is waiting to see whether they are merely doing cosmetic surgery or whether they can truly change the town." The chic bets are at present on Kenneth Hyman, 39, who took over W7 a year ago, rather than on Fox's Richard Zanuck, 33, or Paramount's Robert Evans, 37. Zanuck still believes in super blockbusters, and Evans works under the mighty pressure of Charles Bluhdorn, Wall Street's 'Mad Austrian', who bought up Paramount a little over a year ago and made it a subsidiary of Gulf & Western, an insurance company block.

Present-day film audiences are selective and unpredictable, and the Pursuit of Culture is unlikely to make the Wall Street gnomes, who in the last few years actually have made film production a fringe operation of big business, absolute masters of American film. "Today it might be said that the first drudgery of providing for the material well-being of most Americans is, historically speaking, pretty well over," wrote Alvin Tiffler in *The Culture Consumers*, "and a maturing nation is beginning to concern itself with the quality of existence."

Quality of existence, catching the art fever, finding a mind for the movies, mass elite—the big words of devotion to culture are easily sprung and the evolution of the evolutionary cinema is painfully slow. What retards the take-over by the new forces is the fact that only very big pictures make big money. Robert Wise's *The Sound of Music* has grossed upwards of \$70 million in the U.S. and Canada, and this is the reason Fox has embarked on yet another colossal musical, *Hello Dolly*. Joe Levine, on the other hand, doesn't expect to take in more than \$20 million with *The Graduate*, the runaway hit orientated towards a young audience.

Meanwhile, the revolutionary cineastes are forging ahead. "There are no more excuses," Godard told university audiences while touring the U.S. this spring. "When we started the New Wave and our films weren't distributed, we could throw up our hands and say it wasn't our fault. Today, that's no longer an excuse: you can make films in 16 or 8 mm." The development of relatively inexpensive equipment which permits men with more ideas than money to put things on film is behind the parallel cinema. Arriflex and Nagra can be slung on one

man's shoulders and the results blown up and projected, synchronous and in living colour, on a standard theatre screen. In California, non-Hollywood industrial and 'other' film-makers daily expose more raw stock than the combined big screen-TV industry, and other innovations are round the corner. The first video tape recorders, introduced by Ampex in 1956, sold for \$75,000; today a complete Sony complex retails for \$1,240 and, says *Tape Recording*, a \$500 outfit will be on the market within a year. Already Richard Kahlenberg, of the new American Film Institute, foresees tape cartridge libraries and stores permitting rental or purchase of the classic of your choice.

Is the bottom falling out of what we traditionally call cinema?

Film-making is now divided three ways: overground, underground and student. The Second National Student Film Festival packed 11,000 spectators into UCLA and NYU auditoriums over one weekend last fall, indicating not only that a lot of very bright people think that film is capable of more, more, more, and that they are willing to fail big in their eagerness to succeed, but also that there is an audience. Animated by Kenneth Shapiro, the beginning of a video counterpart to Jonas Mekas' Film Makers' Cooperative has sprung up in New York with the creation of 'Channel One'. This could become the nucleus of an alternative system of distribution; and, says Shapiro, it will soon outgrow underground cinema. Tape has immediate playback, and the chance to erase should encourage critical discipline.

Fission-fusion-fission? Probably yes. The kickback from 'parallel' movie-making is already being felt, and together with the powerful European influence, the American 'salon des

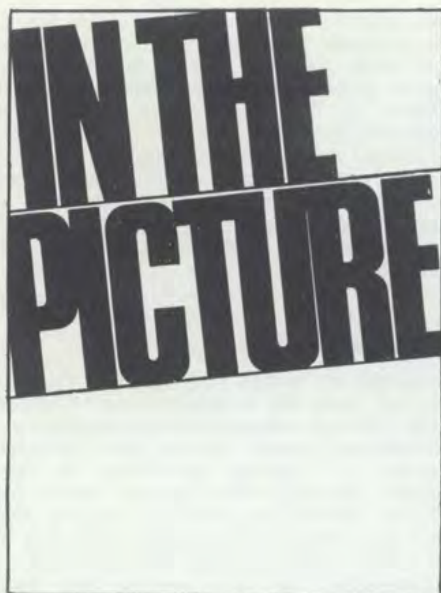
refusés' is making a sizeable chunk of Hollywood product look irrelevant.

Since 1960, we have had the New Wave and its various national repercussions. A new generation has fashioned, by accident as much as by design, a 'new language' to express new ideas—life in the raw, objectivity that believes itself to be total, and storytelling freed from discursive style. The film-maker is no longer a puppeteer, pulling character strings like a fatherly Balzac, but a monitor of recordings, and his 'art' appears only in his choice of scenes and their juxtaposition. This squeezing of plot into a significant presence follows the principle of 'crisis' in classical theatre, and the art of new film-making essentially means going beyond the subject. The best modern films are architectural volumes created with a certain arrangement of their substance and with a certain 'rhythm'. For Bergman, Antonioni and Fellini, the plot has become a pretext for metaphysical, almost Byzantine analysis, and the future does not necessarily lie in this direction.

A fusion of traditional and revolutionary film-making seems more likely to be tomorrow's synthesis. Underground movies are passionate attempts at New Things, generally explosive, elliptical, unpredictable and often poorly made films. Sooner or later, the experimenters, however clannish and inbred they are today, will have to address themselves to what remains the movies' main function: intelligible communication. And Hollywood meanwhile must wake up to new ethics. The fusion of the two will probably come in the form of a handful of new creators, suddenly hitting us with works capturing some unsuspected, yet after the fact self-evident, facet of our times. Then, we can sit back and relax while waiting for the next fission—sometime in the 1980s.

"THE GRADUATE": ANNE BANCROFT, KATHARINE ROSS.





Brussels Conference

ACCORDING TO THE Brussels Institute of Sociology, cinema attendances in Europe have dropped by one thousand million in the past ten years, meaning that only just over half the number of people who went regularly to the cinema in 1958 still do so now. The main reason: television. The main result: a severe loss in revenue to European distributors. In order to maintain film production the Common Market countries have been turning increasingly to American financiers, justifying this move by citing the terms of the Treaty of Rome, which in 1961 ruled that government subsidies within the individual members of the Market are incompatible with the aims of the community as a whole. Responding with predictable enthusiasm to this open invitation to private enterprise, the Americans have set up their own efficient network of production and distribution through Europe—and now the Common Market film industries are fast approaching the same predicament as the British film economy, in which the money invested by the Americans could reach as much as 90 per cent of the total production investment during the current year.

Surveying the scene with an unhappy and impressively analytical eye, Belgium compensated for having no film industry of its own by holding a Conference at the Brussels Institute in April. Its aim was to consider the dangers inherent in the American penetration of European production, and to debate various means of establishing a common defence against these by submitting an appropriate new joint policy to the six governments involved.

Present were some 100 delegates from all branches of the film trade, including a handful of ministers, some Common Market executive officials, and a crowd of extremely cheerful industrialists. Each had been armed beforehand with two enormous compilations of notes, statistics, announcements and declarations of intent, published by the Institute as a basis for discussion. These formidable documents loomed heavily over the Conference, but their main contention—an excellent proposal that a kind of international Film Finance Corporation should be set up, centred on Brussels, which would preserve the indigenous European film industry against collapse should American support be withdrawn—failed signally to get the close and pragmatic

attention it deserved.

Instead, a curious motley of speeches echoed around the conference chamber, interrupted spasmodically by symptomatic breakdowns in communication as the ear-phone translations ebbed and flowed. Despite the invitation from the organisers that all present should voice personal rather than official views, there were some sharp political exchanges, notably in the ranks of the Italian delegation where official acceptance of the American presence (investment now stands at 65 per cent) was fiercely challenged by the representative of the National Union of Specialist Cinemas. The German contingent asserted to a man that private enterprise in collaboration with the Americans would be infinitely preferable to a government-sponsored film industry, and that a million marks a year was being spent on the promotion of German films in Europe so nobody could claim they weren't doing their bit. The Common Market was likened to a dinosaur and to a sick man in an oxygen tent by various more idealistic speakers, and it was generally established that the weaknesses resulted from an excess of national rather than international enterprise—although the pending integration of the French and Italian film industries, and the Union agreements between Britain and members of the E.E.C., seemed to point to some effective spontaneous efforts to develop a common policy for the ultimate security of the European film industry.

Contradiction, ultimately, seemed the keynote of the three-day parade of opinions. Despite the pessimism of the organisers, the delegates expressed a general feeling that the Americans should be amicably exploited for the native gain, and that if they should subsequently withdraw financial support the native talent (stirring listed with a long roll-call of names by one Italian speaker) would manage to survive just the same. Nevertheless it was recognised that some kind of system of stockpiling a percentage of revenue would be the preferable method of ensuring a stable European film economy, although no urgency was apparent in the delegates' references to this theme, and opinions as to whether the stockpile should be governmental or strictly a private enterprise concern were firmly divided. Somewhat wearily, the Belgians agreed to put together a Report on the proceedings which would indicate all the areas of disagreement; it was difficult to see what possible influence this further document would have, but at least the Conference had thrown up some suggestions which might usefully be seized upon before a European emergency comes very much closer—assuming that the Six can agree that it is an emergency.

PHILIP STRICK

The Cinémathèque

ON APRIL 22, after 65 days of protests and demonstrations following his replacement by Pierre Barbin, Henri Langlois was re-elected secretary-general of the Cinémathèque Française. But his reinstatement—acceptable though it is to his supporters—can hardly be construed as a total victory. The proposals adopted by the General Assembly of the Cinémathèque were the work of an administrative sub-committee appointed for the specific purpose of reaching a 'compromise solution', and the formula is an accurate description of their recommendations rather than a simple, face-saving phrase. A corollary of Langlois' reinstatement is the withdrawal of the considerable State subsidy (over a million francs

a year); and though the Cinémathèque is to retain as a concession the use of and profits from the existing theatres on the rue d'Ulm and in the Palais de Chaillot, it is to revert to its original status as a private association, while the State is to form its own archive and deposit.

In his address to the General Assembly on April 22, Langlois insisted that any changes likely to reduce the Cinémathèque's role to that of a glorified 'ciné-club' would be unacceptable, and throughout the conflict the Defence Committee has emphasised the Cinémathèque's triple purpose of 'rescuing, preserving and disseminating' films. How far the withdrawal of state subsidies, which could obviously restrict the Cinémathèque's role as a preserver, may effectively turn it into a ciné-club remains to be seen. It also seems improbable that the compromise solution will do much to eliminate the sources of conflict between the Cinémathèque and the CNC (Centre Nationale du Cinéma) or the CST (Commission Supérieure Technique). The problem of nitrate film remains unsolved: existing laws prohibit its handling, transportation or projection, making it an offence even to use a nitrate negative to obtain a positive print; and there is as yet no indication as to how the State archive proposes to preserve films made before acetate prints became compulsory in 1957. Nor is there any sign that Malraux's 1958 promise of a Film Museum is about to be fulfilled.

Certainly, Langlois' re-election has done little to diminish the efforts of the Defence Committee, which is still vigorously soliciting funds, holding regular screenings at the Cinéma Saint-Lambert, and talking about setting up branches in London, New York, Tokyo, etc. The latest rumour to emerge from Paris is of a projected filmmakers' co-operative. At any rate, the April 22 agreements are unlikely to be the last chapter in the history of the *affaire* Langlois.

JAN DAWSON

Losey on Location

NUMBER 8 ADDISON ROAD is a house which has always intrigued me from the outside: a high, square building, it gives away little from the road, except for the major oddity of being tiled all over. A little cloister-like covered walk leads up to the porte-cochère, and that does hint at excitements within, being lined with some splendid De Morgan tiles and having an inscription which records that the house was built in 1906-7 (for Debenham, as a matter of fact—or was it Freebody?) by Halsey Ricardo.

Irrelevant delight, therefore, to find Joseph Losey on location at this very spot the day I went to watch some shooting on his new film, *The Secret Ceremony*. Venturing up the covered walk I found myself in the midst of setting up a shot in the—well, what would one call it? The central room of the house, one could say: a sort of entrance hall cum sitting room cum (to judge by the decor) Turkish bath; a great tiled dome of a room with Byzantine marble trimmings, vaguely Pre-Raphaelite mosaics on subjects from classical myth, and three minstrels' galleries up aloft, at present crowded with technicians holding lights while below a couple of stand-ins pose by the enormous marble fireplace which is the focal point of the ensemble.

Clearly the subject would have to be pretty bizarre to live up to the decor. And so by all accounts it is. Scripted by George

Tabori from a story by Mario Denevi (which won a short story contest sponsored by *Life Magazine*—Latin American edition—some years ago, it would seem), it concerns a young girl (Mia Farrow) in a state of mild dementia who takes an ageing whore (Elizabeth Taylor) for the reincarnation of her recently dead mother. Her stepfather (Robert Mitchum) and two batty aunts (Peggy Ashcroft and Pamela Brown) apparently play along with this for their own purposes, and other locations include one of the more overgrown sections of Kensal Rise cemetery—the only London cemetery, says Losey proudly, which is overlooked by a genuine Victorian gasworks. The Addison Road house has been stuffed for the occasion with every piece of flamboyant *fin-de-siècle* tat Richard Macdonald could lay his hands on—and, indeed, in certain respects completed, since apparently the original owner got bored, or decided it was all too expensive, and left several of the main reception rooms unfinished and undecorated.

The day I was there turned out to be Robert Mitchum's first on the picture, but he appeared to have stepped into the madhouse with the utmost calm and composure, for all the world as though everything going on were just as natural as *El Dorado*. Elsewhere, a cheery vagueness reigned: when I asked how long the film had been shooting already, estimates ranged between three and nine weeks, and I left them still trying to sort out that one with the aid of a battery of conflicting diaries and calendars. As for how long it had to go, well... But however long it takes, it obviously has the makings of a really gleeful bit of Losey baroque. Or should one now say, Losey *art nouveau*?

ARKADIN

A Maestro not a Maharishi

WHEN THE TITLE of the latest James Ivory-Ismail Merchant venture was announced, everybody took it for granted that *The Guru* would be a Maharishi, with perhaps the Beatles thrown in as well. But this particular guru is a musician, a maestro of the sitar, which is just as mod as the Maharishi.

The story, by Ruth Jhabvala (who scripted both *The Householder* and *Shakespeare Wallah*) and James Ivory (who also directs) weaves a gentle, mostly affectionate satire round a flower girl (Rita Tushingham), a pop singer (Michael York) and the guru (Utpal Dutt, the maharajah in *Shakespeare Wallah*, who runs his own repertory theatre in Calcutta). The guru has two wives, who offer strong competition to Rita Tushingham. Madhur Jaffrey (the film star in *Shakespeare Wallah*) is the old-fashioned begum of the guru. Aparna Dasgupta (best remembered as the tomboyish Pagli of Satyajit Ray's *Two Daughters*) plays the modern wife.

The film, in colour, is shot by Subroto Mitra, Satyajit Ray's favourite cameraman, who is now also an essential member of the Ivory-Merchant team. Finance is provided by 20th Century-Fox, but all the technicians are Indian. The Indian Government, which still allows American and British distribution circuits a virtual monopoly of foreign film imports into India, has at last insisted that they had better keep their part of the bargain, which is to sponsor films to be shot in India with their Indian earnings. Satyajit Ray's *The Alien*, with Peter Sellers, is also American-sponsored—a trend which is likely to increase.

The two British stars of *The Guru*



ROBERT MITCHUM IN "SECRET CEREMONY".

reacted characteristically to India. Michael York, not one of whose films has been shown commercially here, was mobbed by autograph hunters, mostly Indian hippies who get their inspiration from San Francisco. Miss Tushingham, whose husband and baby daughter accompanied her, was very worried by Indian ways, Indian food and an Indian rat, which appeared one day on the sets and sent her scurrying to her car, where she locked herself up for an hour and refused to come out.

The locales for the film are fabulous: the river banks of Banaras, the old fort at Bikaner (one of the erstwhile princely states of India) and Bombay's *haute monde* in old rambling houses on Malabar Hill, or eccentric and modern at Versova Beach at a midnight party presided over by a real Bombay society hostess.

It was at Banaras that Ismail Merchant's Madison Avenue methods failed for the first time. A very underclad *sadhu* (holy man) refused to come off his perch on the banks of the Ganges to add the authentic spiritual touch. He firmly shut the frail door of his thatched reed hut in Merchant's face. More co-operative, however, was India's sitar virtuoso, the famous *ustad* Vilayat Khan, who provides classical music for the film. Barry Foster does the pop music. This perfect East-West image is gently dissolved by the twain not meeting at the end, as in *Shakespeare Wallah*. The flower girl and the pop singer take their leave of the guru, and India, to return to their Western shores.

Meanwhile, in Calcutta, Ray was putting the finishing touches to *Gopi Gyne Bagha Byne*, a nursery tale by his grandfather which is a Bengali children's classic and, in colour, promises to make a charming fantasy. This follows on Ray's first detective film, *Chiriya Khana* (literally translated as the bird-house but in colloquial Bengali corresponding to a nut-house). This was obviously an interim film, like *Nayak* and *Kanchenjunga*, and Ray seems to have derived considerable pleasure from making it. It has his usual sympathetic characters, mostly mental cases in a claustrophobic settlement outside Calcutta. The detective, complete with Watson, lives in suburban Calcutta.

But, it appears, Indian public opinion does not like Satyajit Ray to make things he likes. The press has been very lukewarm and

at cocktail parties people were saying that it is positively indecent of Ray to make films on such ordinary themes. It was not a great success at the box-office and is not likely to be considered a masterpiece abroad. The characters, the faces and the dialogue are chosen and directed with the usual delicate touch of this great filmmaker. I am proud to be perhaps in a minority of one. But I liked *Chiriya Khana* as much as Ray obviously enjoyed making it.

AMITA MALIK

Quebec Libre

CHARLES DE GAULLE's cry of "Vive Québec Libre" from the balcony of the Montreal City Hall last summer is still ringing through intellectual French Canada, and the latest victim of Quebec separatism is this year's Montreal Film Festival. While the Berlin Festival prepared to honour the Young Canadians this summer (last year it was the young Italians), French Canadian film-makers may have wrecked their own showcase to the world and North America's only competitive festival. Demanding a special place in the sun for themselves, the Quebec cineastes want an all-Canadian, if not an all-Quebec festival, without foreign participation.

This follows a so-so year for the Montrealers. Nearly everyone is working, but only Jacques Godbout's *Kid Sentiment*, a National Film Board *cinéma vérité* exercise in teenage love, is having much success at home. *Kid Sentiment* was to have been Canada's entry at Cannes, but it would have had to be subtitled in French since the French Canadian patois spoken in the film is unintelligible to Frenchmen. To avoid being the laughing-stock of the Riviera, the NFB decided not to submit the picture.

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre (*Le Révolutionnaire*) is shooting a new feature for the NFB; but his latest film, *Il ne faut pas mourir pour ça*, ran only two weeks in Montreal despite partisan reviews. "It's very depressing,"

"THE GURU": ZOHRA SEGAL, RITA TUSHINGHAM, MADHUR JAFFREY.



says Montreal distributor André Pépin. "Our movie-makers were crying for years that Americans controlled everything, that you couldn't break into the circuits, that the State of Quebec should intervene. Then the Odeon chain books Lefebvre's film and how long does it manage to hang on in a local house? Two weeks."

Il ne faut pas mourir pour ça reflects the mixed anger and exhilaration of the new Quebec. The film deals with a young-old man, a Quebec Morgan, who is forced to come to grips with his existence and examine what he ought to live and die for. Lefebvre, 27, believes that French Canadian cinema, like French Canada itself, is in search of its meaning and identity. Hence the xenophobic, myopic attitudes. "Our cinema will be French Canadian or it will not be at all," he says.

The lament that there is no smooth marketing machinery is also heard in English Canada. In Toronto, David Secter (*Winter Kept Us Warm*) says that film-makers are spending too much energy and money looking for backing and promoting their own pictures. Secter's second feature, *The Offering*, goes begging for distribution, but the 27-year-old director plans to start a third film later this year. Larry Kent has made four features, but all have run into censorship trouble. His latest, *High*, involves a hippie couple who start on drugs and end up killing for kicks. It was promptly banned in Quebec and Ontario.

The Montreal Festival, under the direction of Robert Daudelin, was the best showcase the young Canadians had. International critics and film-makers, from Jean-Luc Godard to Roman Polanski, were flown in at the festival's expense and mingled freely with the local hopefuls. The 1967 festival, highlighted by Expo, showed four Canadian features, of which two were French Canadian. The result, however, has not been a breakthrough, but demands that the Quebec government nationalise several downtown Montreal houses and start state subsidy. Neither development has materialised. The possibility that their films simply aren't good enough even for the Quebec market has apparently occurred only to Gilles Carle (*La Vie Heureuse de Léopold Z*). "The future lies along the lines of the Czech cinema," says Carle. "We've got to come to a compromise and somehow make a film like *A Blonde in Love*."

AXEL MADSEN

Poland

THE PURGES WHICH followed the March student demonstrations in Poland have hit Polish cinema perhaps harder than any other field of arts or industry. In fact the entire system of production, including the work of the Polish Film School, came under a fierce political attack. A lot of this criticism, especially early on, was directed against individuals occupying key positions. Some—indeed, most of them—have been dismissed or left in positions of lesser influence.

Among those affected are people of international renown: Professor Jerzy Toeplitz has lost his Rectorship of the Higher State Film School in Lodz but still lectures on the History of Film; Jerzy Bossak has resigned from the documentary studio which he headed, and has been removed from the artistic directorship of the Camera film unit; Aleksander Ford has not only been deposed as artistic director of the



SATYAJIT RAY DIRECTING "GOPI GYNE BAGHA BYNE", FROM A BENGALI NURSERY CLASSIC WRITTEN BY HIS GRANDFATHER.

Studio film unit, but, having rejected criticism as unjustified, has been removed from the ranks of the Party. All the artistic directors, literary directors and production managers of the eight existing production units have in fact been dismissed and a complete overhaul of the system is under discussion.

The Polish system, based, in the feature field, on the division of production among several semi-independent 'Film Authors Units', administered by the creative artists themselves and with a distinguished filmmaker in general charge of things, came into force in 1955 and at first proved successful enough to have been adopted as a model for most socialist cinemas of Eastern Europe. But there is no reason to doubt that in time it has developed certain defects. The principle of artistic supervision by a senior colleague has somehow been transformed into an almost conventional commercial interest, and this is now blamed for the general lowering of ambition, and 'safety first' tactics.

It appears that Toeplitz, Bossak and Ford have been made scapegoats for the system's manifest defects, even though Professor Toeplitz has had little direct influence on production. They were, of course, among the leading figures, and indeed pillars, of the Polish cinema, and it cannot be denied that they were also responsible for many of the good things that came out of it. Jerzy Toeplitz directed the Film School at the time it first won world acclaim for producing artists like Wajda, Munk, Polanski or Skolimowski. There is plenty of evidence that his personal qualities and interest in fostering genuine talent greatly contributed to this success. Under Jerzy Bossak Polish documentaries reached, and maintained, a consistent level of excellence perhaps rivalled only by the Canadian Film Board; and in his Camera unit films like Munk's *Passenger*, Has' *How to be Loved* and Skolimowski's *Barrier* were made. Aleksander Ford's most important achievements go a bit further back. During the war he organised and led the Polish Army film unit in the Soviet Union, and in 1945 he became the first director-general of the Polish cinema. As a film-maker he somehow managed to continue turning out decent films (*The Young Chopin*, *Five from Barska Street*) even at the height of Stalinism,

under conditions of extreme bureaucratic and ideological pressure. Later, in 1960, he made *Knights of the Teutonic Order*—the biggest box-office success in the history of the Polish cinema.

Some reports have identified these dismissals with the 'anti-Zionist' campaign waged by the Polish Party. It is true that the three Poles are of Jewish blood and the last two survived the war in the Soviet Union. Thus their background seems consistent with the general pattern of the Polish purges. There were, in fact, press attacks on Aleksander Ford because of his alleged links with a West German 'Zionist' film producer. On the other hand no such charges were proffered against Professor Toeplitz. Indeed, in his case they would have seemed absurdly irrelevant. At any rate, in cinema, the changes are so sweeping in character, and their effect so widespread, that 'anti-Zionist' slogans offer little help towards understanding them.

At the moment, everything is confusion. There is a flood of discussion about the future structure of production, but no one yet knows how the changes, and the new political mood, are going to affect an individual film-maker. Perhaps we would be entitled to consider Skolimowski's *Hands Up* as a suitable test case. This, Skolimowski's reputedly most brilliant work, was finished a year ago and then shelved, for obviously political reasons. One wonders whether the new climate and all the grandly utopian talk will increase the film's chances of reaching the screen, or keep it on the shelf even more firmly.

B.S.

Price Increase

WE MUCH REGRET THAT with this issue the price of SIGHT and SOUND increases from 4s. 6d. a copy to 5s. (5s. 8d. with postage). Rising costs in paper, printing and block-making have made this unavoidable. A year's subscription for readers in the United Kingdom will in future be £1 2s., including postage. For American readers, the price remains unchanged, at one dollar a copy. Details of reduced rates for two or three year subscriptions may be obtained from our circulation department, at 102 Dean Street, W.1.

Anderson shooting IF

ANDERSON AND ARMY.



I: Late March

THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS, Victorian Tudor and sandstone, stood in all the dignity of their cultural tradition and architectural aspiration; and beneath them plane trees hung over the lawns, lovingly tended and protected from schoolboys' feet for over a century. That day special effects men in jerseys were busy as beavers digging ugly little holes in the grass and planting explosives and peat (to make the smoke nice and black) in them. The sacrilege could hardly fail to appeal to Lindsay Anderson who, on a prematurely hot, sunny March afternoon, was shooting location scenes for *If* . . . , his first feature film since *This Sporting Life* in 1962, at a boys' boarding school in Gloucestershire.

It happened to be the school where Anderson himself was educated. 'Of course if people write about this film they're all sure to make a lot out of it and say that I'm paying off old scores. Which I'm not, even if that had anything to do with the film . . .' (He seems in fact actually to have rather enjoyed his school days; he is remembered as having been sociable, conscientious, cooperative and not unusually rebellious.)

That particular March day the school was milling. Apart from the unit of 80 and the actors there were fifty or sixty extras, recruited in Cheltenham to play speech-day visitors. There were ladies in furs and Tory hats, a bishop, officers of the three services, and—inexplicably—four mediaeval knights in chain mail and visored helmets. There was a good deal of confusion about which were real schoolmasters and which were extras (the safest assumption being that the shabby ones were real). And there were boys everywhere; some in the real-life uniform of the school, others in atrocious, ill-fitting uniforms invented for the film. The boy extras were borrowed from the school, but since they could only be spared class by class for forty-five minute periods, each costume had a continual relay of them passing through it.

If . . . seems to be only a provisional title (derived from Kipling); and from time to time Anderson would discuss alternatives. *Crusaders* (which was the first title)? *Come the Revolution* (which he himself prefers)? Why not *Stand Up! Stand Up!*? The original story was developed about eight years ago by David Sherwin and John Howlett, soon after they left their own school. In the interim, and particularly during the past year, during which Anderson and Sherwin have worked together on the screenplay, it has changed a good deal. As it now is, the strange, closed world of school is seen through the central character, Mick, an incorrigible non-conformist, and his two fellow 'crusaders', Johnny and Wallace. They try to resist the oppressive rituals of class and games and corps and chapel and all the rigid hierarchies of boarding school society. They find escape in fantasies of sex and war and motorbikes. In the end fantasy and reality become one, in a violent confrontation of order and anarchy. The rebels set fire to the school on speech day, and snipe from the chapel roof at the guests and staff and boys and other representatives of the establishment as they flee the blaze.

That particular afternoon Anderson was shooting the final scene—the showdown in the quadrangle. His cameraman, Miroslav Ondricek, was very fed up with the sunshine which would tend to make the colour too bright. (Ondricek was Forman's cameraman on *A Blonde in Love* and Passer's on *Intimate Lighting*. Despite his original and brilliant camerawork he has not easily found work in Czechoslovakia because he has not been through the formal training of the official film school. In England he also filmed Anderson's episode for *Red, White and Zero*, *The White Bus*.)

One shot called for the speech-day guests to come rushing out of the blazing school hall and into the line of the insurgents' fire. With a super-professional enthusiasm, the Cheltenham ladies and gentlemen all came rushing out of the billowing smoke and fell fearlessly to the ground (they had all been told to come in their prettiest clothes). A bishop fluttered across the quad, crook and cope waving and looking as if he was on his way from *L'Age d'Or*. A general rallied the O.T.C. The Cheltenham extras, charmingly, had taken it into their heads to applaud after a good take; and Anderson reciprocated with gracious compliments: 'Good. In fact, very good. In fact, excellent. In fact, perfect.' They loved it. One old person was 82 and quite infatuated with the director. Others had taken their annual holidays to be pushed around and shot at and to fall about on the floor in their best clothes. They had all become very professional and talked about tracks and pans and being in frame. 'One thing I will say for this unit,' said the 82-year-old, 'I haven't heard a bad word spoken . . .' She had not, of course, been up with Anderson and Ondricek on a crane, trying to get a shot of Mick firing a sten from the chapel roof . . .

All through the filming the boys from the school sat about on walls and lawns and windows, watchful and vaguely disdainful. Peter Jeffrey, as the headmaster, had to appeal to the rebels with a small, brave cry of 'Trust me! Trust me!'

only to be rewarded with a bullet between the eyes. He half fell, held a splendid stop-action pose while the make-up girl applied a nasty-looking bullet wound, then completed his collapse to the ground. The boys were very unimpressed. 'Surely there'd be some *brains* coming out as well?'

II: Good Friday

The unit had moved to another school, this time in Hertfordshire, and were filming in the latrines. The building was an astonishing survival—a long, stable-like place with a line of doorless cubicles on each side and a wall dividing a double row of urinals along the middle. The drab colours of the pitted glazed bricks and the not-very-scrubbed wooden seats would probably photograph rather well. The scene to be shot had Wallace (Richard Warwick) sitting on one of the loos, strumming a guitar, while a bunch of younger boys carry in one of their class-mates, debag him, dunk him in a lavatory pan and pull the chain, before hanging him up with his own tie and belt. (The day's call sheet requests that the lavatories be carefully cleaned, and that wardrobe provide a reinforced tie.)

Most of the crew were perched on the dividing wall or on a platform behind it. A visiting lady journalist was courteously helped on to the top of a urinal, and gamely held her footing there. Finding a place for the camera was a somewhat catch-as-catch-can business. The action was shot mostly from the platform, looking into the cubicles over the central wall; or obliquely through a narrow ventilation window at the end of the aisle. What a way, they said, to spend Good Friday. A pity, they said, you didn't come yesterday. That was a riot, shot in the showers next door with all the boys rushing round naked and having a ball. It was warmer too, than this.

The loo-dunking scene was rather worrying, because no one seemed sure how long Brian Pettifer, who played the victim, could safely survive strung up upside down. Every time the chain had been pulled, there was a rush to rescue him and a moment's anxiety in case he were drowned or choked or otherwise dead. But he always came up smiling, more or less, to be dried off. Between times, Anderson was giving him and Malcolm McDowell (Mick) lessons in script-writing, analysing bits of the script, demonstrating how they were not 'visualised' and represented a writer's rather than a film-maker's conception.

The lavatory scene looked like a particularly tricky piece of 'visualising'; and in facing the problems presented by the curious geography of the building and the complexity of the particular bit of action, the collaborative role which Ondricek plays became very evident. His discussions with Anderson—conducted in part by signs and intuitions, in part through a charming and unshakeable interpreter called Jirina—related always to creative rather than purely technical questions. He would run around to adjust some detail (the specially reinforced tie, for instance) to get the logic as well as the composition of the image right.

III: Mid-May

As the end of shooting approached, the effect of twelve-hour days and seven-day weeks was beginning to tell a little. A day sitting about on the M-1 waiting for the rain to stop in order to film a scene—the boys shooting the chaplain—which had already been frustrated in Cheltenham, had not improved spirits. The crew members were already talking about their next jobs, many hoping for Lester's *The Bed Sitting Room*.

Lindsay Anderson was looking forward, a little grimly, to four months of editing. He seemed still to be enjoying himself, but he had become less concerned to conceal irritation. The crew had awed memories of outbursts and sarcasms when things had not gone as they should. His moments of ferocity seemed never directed at the actors, however. Anderson's success with actors whether in the cinema or the theatre seems to come from the special relationship he is able to develop with them. He is very far from Sternbergian scorn of the debilitating effects upon personality which sometimes seem to be endemic to the actor's craft and professional circumstances. 'Actors are just children,' he says frequently; and he stands in

a distinctly paternal relationship towards them. The hungry dependence which most actors seem to develop towards a good director seems to touch him, so that he can respond to it personally and directly. 'I'm sorry I was nasty just then, Rupert,' he was saying to a boy actor who had been told off about masking somebody else. 'It wasn't really your fault.' A minute later he snapped again; but Rupert seemed to understand.

The scene being shot was an earlier part of the speech-day debacle. The rebels creep under the stage to find the ammunition for their attack, and to set the place on fire. There is a strange moment when they break into a cupboard full of biological specimens. Among them is a human foetus. Mick, Johnny and a girl they have acquired on the way, gaze for a moment at the half-formed man in awe and astonishment.

The crew, which had unconcernedly accepted floggings, the dunking in the loo, some eyebrow-raising nude scenes shot in the previous week, was split by this one. The majority did not mind ('I thought I'd be a bit worried when I read the script; but when you actually see it it seems quite normal'); but a few were unaccountably outraged. One of the technicians attacked David Sherwin: 'Did you think this one up? It has to be a sick mind to think up something like that. Really sick...' Anderson said, 'Oh for God's sake shut up and get on with it'; and later, quite gratified, to Sherwin, who was a bit surprised and upset: 'Don't you see, you're facing them at one and the same time with the two things they fear most—birth and death? Of course they can't face up to it. I warned you they'd carry on like that. I don't see why you're surprised. That's what the film is about...'

What, actually, will the film be about? It will clearly be a very different thing from Anderson's intense and lyrical documentaries, and equally from the sombre tragedy of *This Sporting Life*. The comedy appears moreover to have a savagery much nearer the surface than in *The White Bus*.

And despite the passages of slow motion, the satire, the fantasy, it is predictable that the film will have little relation to the current school of modish, geary, swinging, post-TV cinema. 'As far as style is concerned, this film is really a development from *The White Bus*. *The White Bus* was quite consciously made in a simple shooting style; and in fact I like more and more a style that is as simple and quintessential as possible. I think to some extent that it is a reaction against the over-application of technique which seems to me to be more and more a kind of mannerism as opposed to a genuine style. The result of using an extremely direct and simple shooting technique is in fact a deliberate contravention of fashion, and the result is a film that from the commercial point of view was regarded as outlandish and utterly uncommercial...'

'And in this picture also the actual shooting technique is extremely simple. One or two devices may be used in it—slow motion is used in *This Sporting Life* too—but this kind of thing I've done very sparingly. I think what one *tries* to do is to get at essences rather than brilliant surfaces.'

Above all, the film is not intended to be about public schools, a realistic social study of the educational system. Anderson sees it as epic in intention, 'a metaphor, if you like, of life in Britain today—the image of the school as a reflection of a certain British tradition or if you like of a hierarchical society...'. David Sherwin thinks his own view is less political: 'I'm not saying it's like Chekhov; but in the same way as Chekhov was about an internal corruption in society... I see it more like that... I admire Buchner very much too. And the tragic thing in *Wozzeck* is that in order to act, in order to free himself from the evil and corruption about him, he is turned into a monster himself. And this is what society really does to good people and people who want to be free. This is what happens to Mick. He becomes as evil and as terrible at the end as the headmaster or the general.'

From time to time, Anderson, perhaps not so formally committed to anarchism as Sherwin, tells him that he is 'a bit cracked'. He also says that this is his last film. 'Never again.' Which in Anderson's case one might suppose is as perverse as to decide to abandon speech.

DAVID ROBINSON



Hepburn in

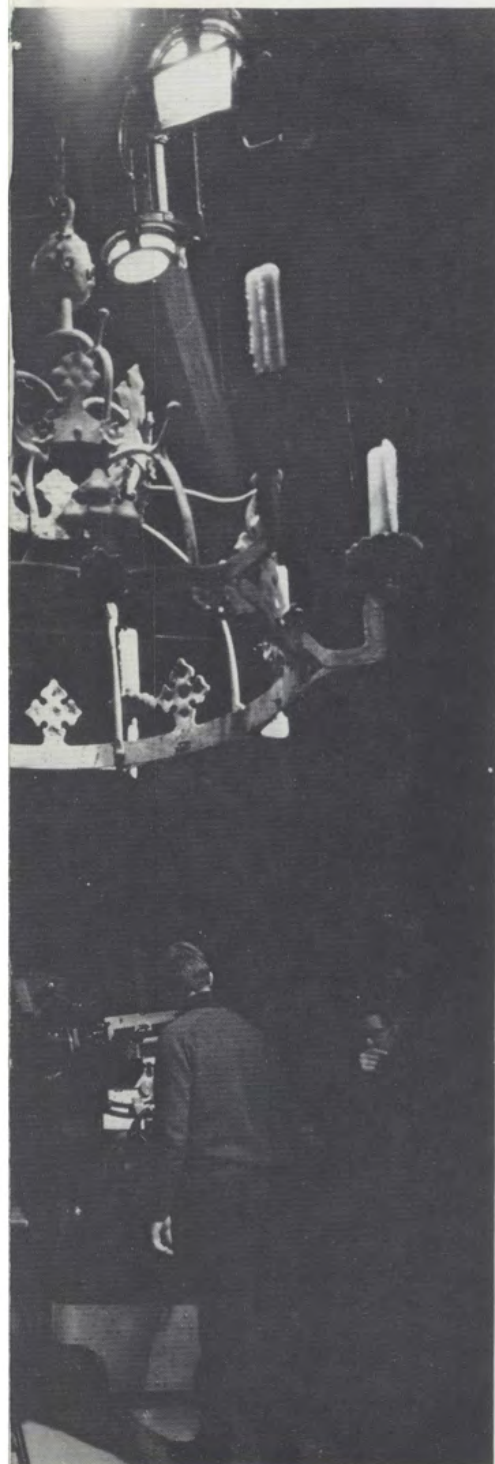


rehearsal



KATHARINE HEPBURN AS ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE.

The lion in winter



performance



WITH DIRECTOR ANTHONY HARVEY.

Minimal cinema:

Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach

Richard Roud



SCENES FROM "THE CHRONICLE OF ANNA MAGDALENA BACH".
BACH IS PLAYED BY GUSTAV LEONHARDT; HIS WIFE,
ANNA MAGDALENA, BY CHRISTIANE LANG.



MINIMAL ART is much in the news this year, and the recent Knokke Festival Grand Prix winner, *Wavelength*, was, theoretically, an excellent example. Forty minutes (not however without cuts, as most people would have it, and not without certain . . . minimal changes of angle) moving slowly down a room to the window wall. Then in London in April, we finally saw one of Warhol's minimal films. Not the 12-hour *Empire*, but *Harlot*, a seventy-minute film which consists only—or as nearly as 16mm. film magazines will let it—of one shot. Amusingly, Warhol plays with the idea by including a rather rambunctious cat who is the only uncontrolled element in the shot; his (or her) constant efforts to escape out of frame did indeed provide a certain tension, a certain playful attitude towards the problems of minimal cinema.

But it seems to me that Warhol with his aleatory cat will go down in history as the Marcel Duchamp of the post-war period: an artist who has thrown out a steady stream of ideas, who has changed our way of looking at things without being able—or willing—to realise them fully. It is not an unenviable position. However, the important thing about minimal cinema, it seems to me, is that it must be meaningfully minimal. "Less is more," Mies van der Rohe told us, but less implies less of *something*. Stripped-down cinema, as in Bresson, implies both that there was something to be stripped down in the first place and, even more important, that when the stripping has to stop, something—however minimal—is left.

* * *

So when I say that Jean-Marie Straub's new film (actually, it was co-directed with his wife Danièle Straub-Huillet), *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*, lasts ninety minutes and contains scarcely more than a hundred shots (instead of the usual eight hundred to a thousand); that all movement, whether of camera or within the frame, is held to a minimum; and that what one sees consists almost entirely of period-costumed musicians executing selections from the works of J. S. Bach, I do not mean that these facts in themselves suffice to make the film an important achievement.* If such were the case, then I would have to call *Harlot* a masterpiece. For all its ground-breaking, it isn't. But Straub's film, I think, is.

To be sure, readers of SIGHT AND SOUND will know that I have always had a weakness for the film that extends one's idea of the cinema, of what it can do, and what, in fact, it can get away with. But apart from the excitement of cliff-hanging, if one does not believe that there is any such thing as a definable, 'essential' cinema, that rather it is in a perpetual state of becoming, then it is only natural that one should

*cf. Alain Resnais: "I won't admit that the image counts most; why not the other way around? It all depends on the subject, but a film which consisted entirely of a sound-track with nothing in the frame would still be a film as long as the rhythm of the splices was in harmony with the rhythm of the words or the music."



prize those films which go out on a limb. Like, for example, *Gertrud*. Those who judged it by received standards found it talky and slow; it never moved, and certainly, they added self-confidently, the one sure thing about movies is that they must move.

True enough, but there is movement and movement. Whole sequences of *Gertrud* consisted of a single shot of two characters sitting on a divan, talking. But in such scenes Dreyer was able to achieve with a smile, a turning of the head, that same exhilaration of movement which other directors can only get from a whole army crossing the Super Panavision Alps. True, one was constantly holding one's breath: would the scene, like Warhol's cat, suddenly slip away from us into boredom? (And this was not the least exciting element of such sequences: let the psychiatrists explain why.)

* * *

But Dreyer at least had a story. Those who saw Straub's first film, *Nicht Versöhnt* (*Unreconciled*) will remember his diabolical skill in taking a straightforward, if complex, novel and reducing it—abstracting it—into an unchronological series of extremely brief Brechtian/Bressonian tableaux; of bafflingly elliptical moments. *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach* works the other way round: Straub starts with the tableaux in the first place. In a sense, the construction of the film is very much like that of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. The story, as it were, is almost entirely confined to the recitative of the Evangelist. But for the most part it is the arias and choruses, the set-pieces, which really provide the drama. Simply and straightforwardly, we are given the information in order to clear the decks for expression of the emotional significance both of what we have been told, and of what we have not.

The St. Matthew role of narrator is taken by Anna Magdalena, so the film only covers Bach's last years, from his second marriage in 1721 to his death in 1748. Throughout, performances of music are linked by Anna Magdalena's calm, non-expressive narration, or occasionally by the words of Bach himself. The film begins, for example, in the Music Room of the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen: Bars 154 to 227 of the Allegro of the 5th Brandenburg Concerto are performed. Then, we cut to 'A Wall and a Clavichord' and Anna Magdalena begins her tale: "He was a chapel-master, director of the chamber music at the court of Anhalt-Cöthen. My father was a trumpeter at the court . . . His wife had died a year before; and from their marriage three sons and a daughter survived . . . For Friedemann, his father had started a little clavier book . . ." And then we hear the 6th Prelude from Wilhelm Friedemann Bach's Clavier Book.

In this section, the music has been chosen, at least partly, to illustrate the text. At other times, the music is only very tenuously related to the text. Or rather, the other way round. Because the film is not really about Bach, but about the music of Bach. Just as it could be said that *Diary of a Country Priest* was not a film about religion, but a film of religion, so this



film is music. Not musical: music. Except in a very special sense, it does not attempt to express the music; rather it lets it express itself. This may sound pleonastically futile; the same was said about Bresson when he had his actor read out loud what we could all see written on the screen.

In somewhat the same way, Straub lets the music speak for itself, and yet the final result is much greater than the music alone could achieve. For just as his cantata-like form achieves drama without plot—through the music—so he has managed to find a way of filming music without 'copying' it, and of achieving action without movement.

On the one hand, the film is shot in an extremely simple manner—any attempt to compete with Bach's architectonics would be doomed to failure. Instead, Straub intensifies the dynamics of the music by positively limiting the visual effects, and this contrast throws into brilliant perspective the complexity of the music. However, the apparent simplicity of his style should not fool us. Each of his thirty-two scenes is cunningly composed; many of them find a kind of imaginative equivalent to the baroque quality of the music by employing certain of the principles of baroque painting—notably what we might call the oppressive diagonal. Many of the sequences (see stills at the top of these pages) make effective use of the baroque practice of "dissolving the logic of the plane and giving to space a troubled directional energy, a compulsive and oblique drive."* Thus the diagonal gives its own impression of movement to an essentially static scene. Furthermore, Straub's compositions are often heavily weighted, alternately to the left and to the right, so that when he cuts from one diagonal to another, he achieves a strangely effective sense of motion. Oftentimes within one of the sequences, the camera at a certain point in the tableau will make a kind of lazy arabesque starting from the right and circling down and then up to the left. On other occasions it tracks in, making a new diagonal in opposition to the original set-up.

* * *

At Knokke, much was talked about the triumph of the contemplative cinema, of which *Wavelength* was the prime example. And it was true that after staring at that damned room for forty minutes, some rather startling effects occurred. But these effects were almost purely retinal. Straub's film is also a kind of contemplative cinema, but infinitely more important, and certainly more rewarding in that the contemplation is on a far more profound level and results in that sense of exaltation which is after all the surest sign of the presence of great art. "Music," wrote Lévy-Strauss, "is the middle way between logical thought and aesthetic perception . . . We know that music is a language, since we understand what it is saying, but its absolute originality, what distinguishes it from articulated language, is that it is untranslatable." This could also be said about *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*.

* Wylie Sypher, *Four Stages of Renaissance Style*.



THE AUTUMN OF JEAN RENOIR

Daniel Millar

RENOIR'S POST-AMERICAN FILMS, from 1950 onwards, present genuine difficulties, though of a peculiar kind, just because they do not seem difficult or obscure at all. They appear to be, if anything, too easy—light, comic and sometimes farcical in spirit, colourful (only two of the seven films are in black and white) and almost self-indulgently sensuous, 'commercial' rather than 'art' films. This caricature of the later Renoir is of course deliberately exaggerated; probably no responsible critic would fully commit himself to such a view if pressed. Yet the recent critical emphasis has been mainly on rediscovery and reassessment of the Thirties films.

In this article I hope to suggest that the peculiar quality of the later films, their combination of a high degree of abstraction with a strongly sensuous realisation, was already latent in the pre-war films; and that Renoir's diversified output has a resonant inner unity. The autumnal metaphor suggests brilliant and vari-coloured foliage that only just conceals the dark, hard branches underneath. If it also implies the final stage of maturing, together with some slowing of creative sap, that also is not inappropriate.

The moral seriousness and social commitments of the pre-war films are transformed in the late films into moral schemas, set against romanticised but not sentimentalised social backgrounds. Characteristically the schema involves a choice among three, not between two, persons or possibilities. Choice between two is characteristic of directors (Hitchcock, Dreyer) who have an underlying sense of the duality, as well as the inextricability, of good and evil: whereas choice between one and zero, as in much of Godard and Bresson, implies a substratum of fatality. But Renoir's full-blooded humanism, while not inhibiting anger and a clear-eyed knowledge of moral failings, has largely precluded any metaphysical concept of evil, and virtually all traces have gone by the Fifties. The unity beneath diversity, traditionally expressed by the magic number three (with mystical overtones added by Christianity, though not particularly relevant for Renoir), is the philosophical principle backing this apparently technical pattern.

The triple schema naturally takes a variety of forms. It may involve the rejection of all three (*The Golden Coach*, 1952), choice by the spectator rather than by a major character (*Le*

Caporal Epinglé, 1962), or even the splitting of one character into two roles (Nénette in *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, 1959). But treble choices are so persistent in the late phase as to alert us to their significant though occasional appearances in the Thirties films as well. The typical mode of that amazingly productive half-decade from 1934 on (ten films in all) involves a richly interlocked world of moral/social/political choices, self-consistent and created in depth—even quite literally, in terms of setting, focus field and camera movement. As it happens, the major comparisons and dilemmas—not trilemmas—in, for example, *Les Bas-Fonds* and *Une Partie de Campagne* (both 1936) are duple. So much for the *analyse des triples*?

* * *

Not entirely, for it throws some light on otherwise enigmatic aspects of *Le Crime de M. Lange* (1935), especially the sub-plot of the innocent young Estelle (Nadia Sibirskaia), who is loved and eventually married by Charles (Maurice Baquet), the acrobatic though temporarily bed-ridden son of the concierge; tentatively pursued by Lange (René Lefèvre); but seduced and impregnated by the villainous publisher Batala (Jules Berry). Estelle seems superficially a refugee not just from a Carné but from a Griffith film—the dichotomy between True Love/Marriage and Sex/Baby is vintage *Way Down East*. But why the inconclusive episode with Lange, the timid romantic who spends his nights inventing the popular adventures of Arizona Jim, to Batala's profit, rather than pursuing the amorous adventures which the laundry manageress, Valentine (Floreille), so clearly offers him?

This question might lead on to other innocent young girls—Natasha in *Les Bas-Fonds*, the daughter in *Une Partie de Campagne*, above all Jackie (Anne Mayen) in *La Règle du Jeu* (1939), whose unrequited and almost unnoticed love for André Jurieux (Roland Toutain) is sketched in with a touching delicacy more comparable to the Henry James of *The Awkward Age* than to Victorian melodrama. The trail could be pursued further—the three adolescent girls of *The River* (1950), Nini in *French Cancan*, perhaps Erika in *Le Caporal Epinglé* or even Nénette in *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*. Yet an explanation can also be found within *Le Crime de M. Lange* itself. The brief and apparently pointless scene between Estelle and Lange in the park, all fumbling with benches, words, caresses and cigarettes, opens and immediately closes a third possibility for both of them. Lange, who had previously admired the legs of Batala's tarty secretary, Edith (Sylvia Bataille), and had therefore been told off by Valentine, weakly allows himself to be picked up by an overblown prostitute when his pursuit of Estelle has failed. His subsequent false conflation of Estelle and the prostitute in bragging to Charles, and the infuriated response, opens his eyes to the reality of himself and also of the delightful and previously ignored Valentine, in whom the dream of love and the desire of the flesh can be happily united—having discovered his full manhood in her bed, he can bring a new competence to the world of work without surrendering his by now lucrative world of fantasy.

Similarly, the equally virginal Estelle, reluctant to give herself fully to Charles and decisively rejecting Lange's feeble imitation of the philandering Batala, is swiftly deflowered, virtually raped, by Batala himself. Her pregnancy and shame keep her from Charles, who is immured in a room made tomb-like by Batala's advertisements blocking the windows; but Batala's pretended death brings light to Charles, love and unquestioning forgiveness to Estelle. The convenient loss of her unwanted baby, which Charles had been willing to accept as his own, is not at all a thoughtlessly cruel point of plot convenience. It assumes its true symbolic meaning in relation to the real father.

For Batala also has three loves. The ex-mistress, Valentine, he cannot recapture—she is armed by experience and by her new love for Lange. The current mistress, Edith, is his accomplice in business swindles and he occasionally prostitutes her to creditors; his parting words to her consist of instructions for turning professional. But when she puts these successfully into practice at the railway station, we can see both that she is acting an 'Estelle' role and that she once *was* the innocent

young girl which she now pretends to be. The baby which Batala gives to Estelle herself is his unconscious pledge to the future, just before his supposed death; but it dies, negated by Charles' devotion. When Batala returns, ironically disguised as a priest, he meets his real death. But Lange shoots him, not because of what he has done to Valentine or Edith or Estelle; but because he plans to take over the Co-operative which has replaced him and thrived in his absence.

This last point illustrates how deliberately partial my account of the film has been. The social/political aspect, with its critique of Capitalism, its commitment to syndicalist Socialism, its characteristically Renoiresque emphasis on camaraderie, is obvious enough to be left unexplored here. But another facet, which superficially relates it to *The Golden Coach* and *French Cancan*, demands some brief comment—the theme of art and its relation to life. Art, as represented by the 'Arizona Jim' serial, begins as a fantasy reaction against the frustrations of real life; but this becomes the raw material of mass communication and so enters the working world of printing machines, legal contracts, advertising and the magazine kiosk. When Lange's life is transformed by love and by a new relationship to work, he paradoxically enters more deeply into the fantasy as well. He develops a new photographic comic-strip format, himself posing as Arizona Jim; he even receives a film offer, though he is half-inclined to turn it down because the tawdry sets of the studio cannot do justice to his imaginary Arizona.

At this tantalising point the theme is dropped. The parallels between Lange, the creator of Jim, and Renoir, the creator of Lange, are so clear that it is more useful to examine the differences. First, Lange's serial is purely escapist—it has social function (to employ the printers, to entertain children) but no social meaning. Secondly, it has no relationship to the theatre. For Renoir, the content of the film medium is theatre. It may also be painting or music or dancing or, admittedly, an adapted novel: but it is theatre essentially, i.e. professional actors performing predetermined (though not rigid) roles in a chosen setting. Improvisation and real settings are no contradiction to this principle. Renoir stands firmly with Dreyer, Visconti, Bergman and Welles; and against Bresson, Godard and (in a different way) Hitchcock and Buñuel. The films of the first group are acted according to some dramatic convention, whether well or badly. The films of the second group are simply performed, and only in bad performances can one detect any 'acting'.

* * *

On examination, then, the thematic parallels of *Le Crime de M. Lange* with *The Golden Coach* and *French Cancan* turn out to be less important than the structural parallels. A similar conclusion, more surprisingly, emerges from a comparison between *La Grande Illusion* (1937) and *Le Caporal Epinglé*. Both are set in prisoner-of-war camps, both concentrate mainly on three men and their shifting relationships but add a woman at a late stage to pair with the central man, both demand that the spectator himself—not the woman—compare and judge the attitudes and actions of the three men.

Once past these formal affinities, the differences assert control. In *La Grande Illusion* the main characters are laden with social and political distinctions and with representative significance, though this enriches rather than diminishes their human personalities; whereas those in *Le Caporal Epinglé*, all 'other ranks' instead of officers, are deliberately ordinary and only differentiated by broad brush-strokes—the jauntiness and pointed nose of the Caporal (Jean-Pierre Cassel), the doggy devotion and round face of Pater (Claude Brasseur), the world-weary pose and spectacles of Ballochet (Claude Rich).

La Grande Illusion is a film of ideas, though the ideas are given a local habitation and a name. *Le Caporal Epinglé* virtually escapes from ideas altogether; and yet it is paradoxically also more abstract, hardly at all concerned with divisions—even the French prisoners and their German captors are almost indistinguishable—and focused entirely on the notion and mechanics of escape, which had been



"FRENCH CANCAN": GIANNI ESPOSITO AND FRANCOISE ARNOUL.

almost incidental in *La Grande Illusion*. Only in their theoretical and practical attitudes to escape do the Caporal, Pater and Ballochet define themselves. The Caporal, who needs no name, is 'épinglé', pinned down, unfree; his motive, almost an instinct, is to free himself. His attitude is totally simple—no past, no future. Ballochet's attitude is clouded by past boredom, by opportunism, by cowardice and inertia, by false heroics—and so he dies. Pater's attitude is also clouded, less seriously, by resentment of the past, fear of the future, and dependence on the Caporal—but he reconciles these and succeeds.

Having taken *Le Caporal Épinglé* out of turn, so to speak, it is necessary to look back at *La Règle du Jeu*. This great film is not only the summation of all Renoir had done in the Thirties, but the precursor of his best work in the Fifties, particularly in its relationship to theatrical tradition (it is subtitled 'Fantaisie dramatique'). Here I shall examine only one thread which relates it to *The Golden Coach* and *French Cancan*—the situation of a woman confronted with a choice among three men, i.e. Christine (Nora Gregor) with her husband Robert, Marquis de la Chesnaye (Marcel Dalio), her would-be lover, the aviator André Jurieux, and her old friend Octave (Jean Renoir).

Christine's choice does not have the schematic simplicity which characterises the later films. Her husband can offer her wealth and stability in a foreign country (she is Austrian). But the stability is threatened by Robert's mistress Geneviève de Marras (Mila Parély); and Robert's heart, if anywhere, belongs to his elaborate mechanical toy theatres, where behaviour is totally controlled and predictable, while his truest friendship is given to Marceau (Julien Carette), the little poacher whose simple desires comprise only stolen game and stolen wives. The second possibility, André, is a public hero, a man accustomed to staking his life on an adventure and inconveniently translating this ethic from aviation to love. Christine's brief and interrupted dalliance with him was not intended to be a great romance; but he insists that it is the central event in his own life and in hers too. He goes on insisting, jealous of Robert, even of Saint-Aubin, with whom Christine flirts at the fancy dress ball, until she wearily agrees to go away with him; but he is not jealous of his friend Octave, who is also Robert's friend, Christine's friend, a universal uncle and sponger—and, according to Renoir himself, the villain of the piece. But Christine, torn between the two poles of Robert and André, opts for the friendship of Octave as her truest love; while Octave betrays Robert, André and finally Christine herself, whom he sacrifices to his friendship for André, thereby accidentally sending André to the death prepared for himself.

The difficulty in isolating this thread (even so, I have omitted several crucial plot points, relationships and exchanges of role) serves to emphasise the difference between *La*

Règle du Jeu and the late films. Yet the importance of triples persists to the climax, André's murder. For who kills André? Is it the jealous gamekeeper Schumacher (Gaston Modot), who pulls the trigger on the wrong man for the wrong reason? Or Robert, who tacitly assumes responsibility for this *crime passionnel*? Or Octave, with his third and last and most well-intentioned betrayal? Because no simple answer suffices, *La Règle du Jeu* remains the genial master's most deeply tragic film. And yet, without the development and amplification of the late films, even *La Règle du Jeu* would not yield up its full richness. As Renoir said in 1961: "Everyone really only makes one film in his life, and then he breaks it up into fragments and makes it again, with just a few little variations each time." The Triple Choice, then, is implicit in *La Règle du Jeu*, but with many variations and alongside other patterns. It becomes more explicit in *The River*, where the three girls, Harriet, Valerie, and Melanie, love one man, Captain John, though it is still not dominant.

* * *

In *The Golden Coach* it becomes the central structure, and yet is not coterminous with the main theme. This brilliant paradox makes *The Golden Coach* the most endlessly fascinating of the late films, though perhaps less coherent than *French Cancan*. Camilla (Anna Magnani), the Columbine of a wandering Commedia dell'Arte troupe, arrives in the 18th-century Spanish colony of Peru (actually, Cinecittà). Her lover is a young nobleman, Felipe (Paul Campbell), who acts as business manager to the troupe; but she soon acquires two more, the matador and local hero Ramon (Riccardo Rioli) and the Viceroy himself (Duncan Lamont). The schema, though sharply drawn, is not quite as simple as it looks—i.e. the Theatre and a quietly dedicated life (Felipe); exciting and passionate Romance (Ramon); the wealth and social position of Power (the Viceroy). For Felipe, jealous of her infidelities, abandons Camilla on the verge of theatrical success and goes off to become a soldier against the Indians; having been captured, he returns eventually in a third role to offer her a Rousseauesque life of unity with nature among the Indians, instead of the artifices of city life and the theatre itself. Ramon is only the recipient of occasional favours—the three choices, it should already be clear, are rarely of equal weight—but the Viceroy becomes the most serious contender, even giving her the newly arrived Golden Coach, which was intended as the symbol of his own viceregal power.

This gift brings to a head dissatisfaction at Court, and the Council decides to depose the Viceroy unless he breaks with Camilla and returns the Coach. He agrees, until Camilla's irruption scandalises the Court and shames him into recantation. But it is too late: he has lost both Camilla, through weakness, and his position, through stubbornness. Yet Camilla invents a third role for the Coach, already the symbol of royal power and of personal love, but for her now emptied of significance. In a stunning *coup de théâtre* she interrupts the deposition ceremony by arriving in the Coach with the Bishop, who publicly thanks her for presenting it to the Church for use in processions of the Blessed Sacrament, the symbol of supernatural power and love. This resolution of the conflict saves the Viceroy; even Felipe and Ramon leave off duelling to join in the acclaim. Camilla, by this supreme moment of theatricality in real life, has affirmed her final dedication to the lonely métier of the stage. Her renunciation has, of course, no religious significance at all. Love, conflict and danger, politics, wealth and religion are all simply grist to the theatrical (and cinematic) mill:

The intellect of man is forced to choose
Perfection of the life, or of the work;
And if it take the second must refuse
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.

Yeats is decidedly more downright than Renoir; but Camilla might well echo his "...gather me Into the artifice of eternity," for her story unfolds *in a film*, made in a film studio, where the divisions between theatre and life are at their most uncertain. Further, she is embodied by a great actress, whose superiority to the three male actors makes Camilla's choice the only logical conclusion. Felipe and Ramon are merely

sketches, while even Duncan Lamont's intelligent but pallid rendering of the Viceroy is no match for Magnani's emotional power. Such a balance, or lack of it, could be valid for only one film; with all its beauties, including decor and music, *The Golden Coach* is essentially unrepeatable.

* * *

So when Renoir took up again both the theme of the Theatre and Life, and the construction of a woman's three choices, in *French Cancan* (1954), the elements and their arrangement had changed considerably. This was only partly because, in his first French film for fifteen years, he was telling a quintessentially Parisian story, the founding of the Moulin Rouge. He also reverted to the figure of the innocent young girl, this time as a beginner in show business, instead of the sophisticated actress and woman of the world. Nini, a little laundress like Estelle, becomes a star of the Cancan; but, as played by Françoise Arnoul, she lacks the character and personality of Anna Magnani's Camilla, and only becomes fully alive in the dance itself. This is not merely a miscalculation, since the interest of her triple choice lies mainly in its effect on the nascent Moulin Rouge rather than on her own life.

In this sense her role forms only a major sub-plot, and as such is curiously parallel to Estelle's in structure though not in substance. Instead of the publisher, Batala, there is the impresario, Danglard (Jean Gabin); the similarity is not so forced, despite the difference in moral emphasis, for Batala is certainly the most vivid character in *Le Crime de M. Lange*, while the screen presence of Gabin brings an intangible aura of corruption to all his later roles. Instead of the paper-boy, Charles, there is the baker's boy, Paulo (Franco Pastorino), to represent quotidian and ultimately domestic life; instead of the romantic dreamer, Lange, the romantic fairy-tale Prince Alexandre (Gianni Esposito) who even, like Lange, contributes the solution to the financial problems of the co-operative enterprise. This comparison is in fact rather more effective than a co-reading with *The Golden Coach*, especially as the Camilla configuration applies hardly less well to the dancer Lola, 'La Belle Abbessé' (Maria Félix)—another theatrical star in a foreign country—with the financier Baron Walter standing in for the Viceroy, Danglard for Felipe (though Felipe's connection with Theatre is admittedly tenuous), and the fatuous Captain Vallorgeuil (Michel Piccoli) for Ramon.

Neither of these schemas, Nini's or Lola's, would be of central importance without their common point. Like Batala, like Captain John, but more crucially than either, Danglard has three loves representing the past, the present and the future. To all three—Lola, Nini and the singer Esther Georges (Anna Amendola)—he offers neither undying devotion nor domestic bliss but his creative directorial artistry in 'the finest métier in the world—the Theatre.' Whereas genius in *The Golden Coach* was represented as dependent on improvised yet controlled emotion and so was feminine, here it originates in instinctive yet critically selected ideas and is therefore masculine. Danglard's true passion is putting on a show, the discovery and development of talent, the moulding of his raw material into creatures of the stage. Though he by no means neglects male talent, his own emotional needs as well as his predominantly male audiences drive him with more excitement to feminine discoveries. His love affairs, though not insincere, are incidental and intimately linked to his overriding theatrical purpose. The emotional problems involved in discarding one mistress, in acquiring another (Nini), and ultimately in moving on to a new protégée (Esther) are simply an aspect, like his financial difficulties, of his artistic aim. For Lola, whose belly-dancing as 'La Belle Abbessé' at Danglard's Paravent Chinois opens the film, is 'finished' in the sense that she has reached a degree of Grande Dame theatricality which can develop no further; and also, more practically as a performer, because the jealous desire for her of Baron Walter, Danglard's backer, leads to the closure of the Paravent Chinois.

On the verge of bankruptcy, Danglard returns to everyday (or every-night) life for inspiration, and finds the fresh and



"FRENCH CANCAN": STREET SCENE IN MONTMARTRE; DANGLARD BACKSTAGE AT THE PARAVENT CHINOIS.

unspoiled Nini joyously dancing at a *bal musette*, La Reine Blanche, in Montmartre and spontaneously improvising a Cancan. Here is his new idea, a revival straight from indigenous sources. The exoticism of Chinese Screens and La Belle Abbessé is out; the popular tradition and pure Frenchness of Red Windmills and Nini is in. If the unavoidable continuity between Danglard and his twentieth-century successor, the director of films, explains the considerable emphasis put on his financial and building problems, it also does not seem illegitimate to translate into Renoir's own work as "No more Hollywood or India or trilingual versions of eighteenth-century Peru in an Italian studio—back to the roots in France, in the past, even in the Renoir family." For all his subsequent films have been French and, hardly excepting the timeless fable of *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, set in various periods of the past.

Danglard aptly builds the Moulin Rouge on the site of La Reine Blanche, where Nini used to go dancing with Paulo. She had given herself to Paulo for the first time before keeping her first evening appointment with Danglard, who had led her, instead of to the bedroom she expected, to a dancing-class with Mme. Olympe (Valentine Tessier), once La Guibolle, a star of the Cancan—just as Valentine Tessier was in 1934 the leading actress in *Madame Bovary*. For the Cancan, being an old dance revived, has three faces in the film: Prunelle, the

aged and long-forgotten alcoholic who still regards Danglard as 'a prince among men'; La Guibolle, retired from active performance but still lithe enough to pass on her expertise to a new generation; and, of course, Nini, the key figure in the revival both of the dance and of Danglard's position in show business. The lessons, the auditions, the rehearsals in which each new degree of development is marked by the addition of a layer of clothing, soon captivate Nini—as well they might, for these scenes are among the most beautifully realised in the whole film, effortlessly surpassing the American musical models on which they clearly draw. As she dresses while leaving Paulo's bed (for the last time, as it turns out) to attend the foundation-stone ceremony at the Moulin Rouge site, she cannot resist practising a few steps, despite Paulo's disapproval.

The ceremony is a turning point in her life and in the film. It is the second time that three circles have intersected on this ground—the High world of business, the military and the aristocracy; the Low world of the working and criminal classes; and the Artistic world of entertainment, which lies somewhere between the other two and yet is quite apart in its values. The jealous fight between Lola and Nini, and the beautifully choreographed disruption which follows, comes to a climax when Paulo pushes Danglard into a deep grave-like hole, so crippling him for forty days, and earning himself sixty days in prison. At the moment, Nini's concern is for Paulo, hauled off by the police, rather than for Danglard, lying possibly dead in his 'grave', while she hardly notices the tentative overtures of Prince Alexandre. Yet she has virtually made her choice and soon becomes Danglard's mistress.

But Danglard's 'resurrection', like that of the Cancan, is not without setbacks. Lola had gone to live with Walter mainly to persuade him to finance Danglard's new project—her bizarre and bored love scenes were intercut with the preparations for the Cancan. Now she turns her influence the other way. Danglard is impoverished again and she issues her ultimatum: no more Cancan or Nini, if he wants money to finish the Moulin Rouge. To accept would compromise both his sexual and, more important, his artistic integrity. He refuses; and the gaiety of his love scene with Nini, on the brink of eviction from his hotel, contrasts with the comic-operatic despair of Lola as she submits to the tedious embraces of Vallorgeuil. But each situation, of course, is as precarious as the other.

The precariousness, for Nini, is underlined by successive meetings with Paulo, newly released from prison, and with the Prince, who comes to woo her when, the dance lessons discontinued, she is back at her mother's laundry. He comes with roses, and the idyllic scene at the top of La Butte is not merely fragile but, with all its charm, basically false—as Renoir makes clear by the romantic *comédie rose* setting, as well as by the stolen Camembert which Nini is trying to hide. The two fragrances, roses and Camembert, cannot really blend; yet this is the uncertain basis on which work on constructing the Moulin Rouge and reviving the Cancan is recommenced, since the Prince insists on financing the project as a showcase for Nini. The building is complete when Lola again intervenes, provoking Nini to proclaim herself Danglard's mistress before the Prince and the assembled company. The Prince, left alone in the empty Moulin Rouge, shoots himself—but not fatally, since this is a *comédie musicale*, if not necessarily *rose*.

The apparent catastrophe resolves most of the problems. Like Danglard and the Moulin Rouge, the Prince is 'resurrected'. Accepting reality, he asks only for one romantic evening with Nini, some false memories to tell his grandchildren. They tour the *cafés-concerts* and music-halls; to conclude the evening he gives her the deeds of the Moulin Rouge. This, along with Lola's repentance for her misdeeds, seems to clear the future for the successful revival of the Cancan, but some obstacles remain. For instance, Paulo meets Nini as she returns home and issues his ultimatum: she can still retract now, but once she has appeared on the stage they are finished. She dismisses this and so disposes of two out of her three choices in one evening, holding on to the document which represents the third.

A more serious obstacle is her own possessiveness towards

Danglard, since she identifies her choice of *métier* with her choice of man. But Danglard has made a new discovery, 'a wild flower of La Butte', Esther Georges, who makes a successful debut as a singer. Danglard's delight and interest arouse Nini's jealousy and, despite exhortations to be a *petit soldat* (good trouper), she refuses to appear in the climactic Cancan. Exasperated, Danglard makes his own position, and Nini's choice, finally explicit: "If you want a lover, wire Alexandre. If a husband, marry Paulo. I care for only one thing, what I create—and what I create is you, and you [Lola] and you [Esther] . . ." So Nini accepts the life she has chosen and dances the Cancan while Danglard, playing out his role, sits backstage, not watching yet furiously tapping his foot to the rhythm—his work concludes where Nini's begins.

The 'French Cancan' itself, despite a few minor jolts in Boris Lewin's editing, is immensely physical and pictorial, magnificently sustained in comparison with the feeble efforts of John Huston in *Moulin Rouge* and Walter Lang in *Can-Can*. If it fails to transcend the limitations inherent in this dance-form itself and in Françoise Arnoul's Nini, one can ascribe this both to Renoir's fidelity to popular theatre and to Danglard's showmanship. Renoir could have added specifically cinematic special effects or given Danglard more of his own attributes as a creative artist. Scrupulosity preventing, he intercuts a series of two-shots with the finale of the dance—Danglard and yet another girl singer, Lola and Walter, Paulo and a girl who failed at the Cancan auditions, various pairings off of minor characters at different social levels—to give the same conventional effect as the ending of a Shakespearian comedy. The simplification carries its own distancing ironies and therefore ties up with the two-dimensional posters of the opening, beneath the credits.

This complexity of perspectives, as in *The Golden Coach*, both recedes and persists. *Eléna et les Hommes* (1956) completes a kind of trilogy, with Ingrid Bergman as a middle point between the virtuosity of Magnani, the exoticism of Maria Félix, and the near anonymity of Françoise Arnoul. As an exiled Polish princess living out a semi-fantasy existence in Paris, a foreign city, she too has a choice of three men: her rich fiancé, Martin Michaud (Pierre Bertin), the politically opportunist General Rollan (Jean Marais) and the uncommitted Henri de Chevincourt (Mel Ferrer). The trio of domesticity, power and romance/theatre is not fully elaborated till the final tableau when Henri, assuming the role of the General, kisses Eléna in the proscenium frame of the window and so clarifies to her what her own choice of romance (private, not public and political) really consists of.

* * *

I do not intend to discuss *Eléna et les Hommes* beyond thus sketchily indicating its relationship with the preceding films. But I shall touch on *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, mainly to point out its deficiencies in comparison with the 'trilogy'. The triple choice pattern at first seems to have disappeared altogether, but in fact it has merely taken a peculiar new form—the double choice made twice over, and by a man. Professor Etienne Alexis (Paul Meurisse), a eugenics expert and promoter of human artificial insemination, is a strong candidate for the Presidency of the United States of Europe—the film being set in an imaginary future which is really a dream of the past, related to the world *within* the paintings of Renoir *père*, rather than to the real world from which he had drawn. Etienne is engaged to a German Countess, Marie-Charlotte (Jacqueline Morane); but twice he is tempted away from her by Nénette (Catherine Rouvel), who is therefore assigned a double role.

At her first irruption into Etienne's life, Nénette is a young peasant girl working on the farm, quintessentially French, with a deep-rooted relationship to her family and the land—the living embodiment, in fact, of natural insemination (except in her opinions, since she is ironically a firm believer in artificial insemination, until she meets Etienne). She contrasts completely with the artificiality of the *fête champêtre*, which nominally represents modern progress but visually evokes the unstable elegance of the pre-Revolutionary world commemorated in so much of eighteenth-century French painting.

Here the instability is overt, since the picnic is disrupted by a magic wind called up by Cabri, a mysterious flute-playing earth-spirit. Nénette's contrast is completed in her post-Impressionist scene of bathing naked in the river. Despite the primarily sexual overtones of her nudity, the earth-spirit's flute and goat, and the upblown skirts at the picnic, Renoir is able also to imply his comments on a revolution in painting which reflected a political revolution (interestingly, Cabri was also the name of the old poacher in *La Marseillaise*). Unfortunately his visual mastery here is not accompanied by a corresponding control over plot or performances, a weakness only partly blamable on the television-style method of shooting used in the film.

So the general intention and the pictorial reminiscences come across clearly enough, but with an admixture of almost wilful and over-personal fantasy, as well as a certain carelessness in realisation which contrasts sadly with, for example, the beautifully organised *melée* at the Moulin Rouge foundation ceremony in *French Cancan*. To cite an unlikely but illuminating parallel, Buñuel in *The Exterminating Angel* presents a much more fantastic situation yet handles it with such a nice balance between naturalism and irrationality that we are scarcely aware even of transitions. But in *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* the mythological elements seem stuck on arbitrarily; their intellectuality represents a failure of intelligence, however uncharacteristic and fortunately temporary.

Nénette's idyll with Etienne is broken up by the persuasions of his friends, who make her believe that she is ruining his

career. She disappears into her second role, the carry-over being her as yet unborn child, since Etienne has impregnated her in the least artificial manner. In this second role, as hotel servant and laundress (reminiscent of Estelle rather than Nini), she is more clearly identified than in her peasant role with the economic basis on which the upper classes subsist, and depend for the keeping up of appearances—Etienne accidentally meets her again while looking for a chambermaid to help him on his wedding day. Discovering both her pregnancy and their undiminished mutual love, he of course marries her instead of Marie-Charlotte, and decides to stand for the Presidency anyway, though on a revised platform.

At the opposite pole to Nénette in both roles, Marie-Charlotte has several facets. She is German, therefore non-indigenous, tying in with the impersonality of the United States of Europe (her predecessor, Christine in *La Règle du Jeu*, was far more sympathetically presented; but so is Erika in *Le Caporal Epingle*, and no one is likely to accuse Renoir of racism or chauvinism). She is militaristic in manner and even in dress, since she is an enthusiastic leader of Girl Guides. She is aristocratic and therefore dated, but also up to date in her determination to secure power, even if indirectly, and in her adherence to artificial insemination—with her clearly a psychological bent, whereas in Nénette it appears as a not unadmirable desire to avoid male domination and keep an inevitably temporary measure of independence.

Etienne's choice is therefore excessively simple, but its tone
(Continued on page 161)

THE FRENCH CACAN.



SKOLIMOWSKI



Christian Braad Thomsen

"In Poland, the authorities willingly offer the outsider a hand. But it happens that the authorities and the outsider both hold out the same hand, either the left or the right. That is why they do not always succeed in shaking hands." (Jerzy Skolimowski in *Cahiers du Cinéma*)

THE YOUNG POLISH DIRECTOR Jerzy Skolimowski is probably the most explosive and original film-maker in Eastern Europe. Recently he visited Denmark, where he wants to shoot his next film, and where I had the opportunity to meet him both at a press conference and privately. When there were a lot of people around, he gave a closed and evasive impression—not in any impolite way, but seeming reluctant to talk openly to people he did not know. Skolimowski would always ward off unwelcome questions with ironic answers and avoid interpretations of his films. He would not talk about the use of symbols in his films, even denying that he uses symbols at all.

"I never think of symbols when I make a film," he said. "Everything emerges concretely and spontaneously and I do not interpret anything. The passion for cars, for instance, is something real to a boy of twenty, isn't it? The character played by Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Le Départ* is obsessed by cars, but after all he has a concrete relationship to them. He uses them as vehicles, he doesn't kiss them. I love cars myself, but cars don't love me all that much."

It is impossible to try to discuss the love-hate relationship to cars with Skolimowski. I tried to draw a parallel between boxing in *Walkover* and cars in *Le Départ*, and asked if the films were a kind of model for his own life. First he

stopped boxing, and now—what about cars? He answers cautiously that maybe there is a point: he is not all that enthusiastic about cars, not like he used to be. As to boxing, he is happy to be finished with it. Otherwise his head would have been as spoiled inside as it is outside.

At the press conference a Danish director asked Skolimowski if he found it difficult to transplant himself from Poland to Belgium, where *Le Départ* was shot. If there were problems because of the different cultural milieux? Skolimowski answered that the problem of putting the camera in the right place before shooting is so difficult that it does not matter to him at all whether the filming takes place in Poland, Belgium or Hollywood. He says apologetically that he does not know how to answer theoretical questions, and compares himself to the man whose wife always gets irritated hearing him tell the same joke over and over again whenever they are at a party.

"I am afraid to be boring to myself. That is why I always try to answer the same questions in a different way. The only condition is that the answer has to be true—of course."

Of *Le Départ* he says: "It is a non-serious film on a serious subject. When you leave the cinema you are supposed to think the problems over on a level that is higher than the film's. I wanted to make a film about the contrast between the things you do and the things you want to do: i.e. between the hero's job as a hairdresser's apprentice and his dream of winning a motor race. I wanted to connect those two extremes."

Why does the film burn at the end?

"That relates to the scene where the girl shows slides to her boy-friend. At a certain moment the projector catches fire because the girl has fallen asleep. The picture that burns is the very first picture of her as a grown-up person. At the end of the film, Jean-Pierre Léaud has realised that his dreams about cars were rather childish. He has suddenly learned to distinguish between what is essential and what isn't. In short, he has grown up. That is why I let the film burn—there is nothing more to say. *Le Départ* was shot in twenty-seven days, and that was all right with me as I am a very lazy man and the less time I have the better I work. If I have enough time there is a risk that I won't get anything done."

Skolimowski does not understand French at all, even though *Le Départ* was shot in French. He compares himself to a deaf-mute talking through lip-reading: he understood his actors through their facial expressions. Nevertheless he had two interpreters around all the time. This was important because there was so much improvisation that Skolimowski did not always know what the actors happened to say during shooting.

Skolimowski holds his composer Krzysztof Komeda in high esteem. Komeda composed the music for *Le Départ* and recorded it with international jazz musicians like Don Cherry, Gato Barbieri, René Ureger and Kenny Clarke. "As to myself, I can only sing out of key, but even my false notes can inspire Komeda. Or we'll talk another language. Suppose I need music for a desperate scene, then I might tell him: 'Remember ten years ago. You were skiing and broke your leg. I drove by in my car without helping you. How did you react?' Anyway, *Le Départ* is a test-case as to how much music a film can take, and we may have used too much. In the future I intend to use less music in my films."

And the future? Skolimowski has many irons in the fire. In Czechoslovakia he has shot his sixth film, *Dialogue*, also starring Jean-Pierre Léaud. He has plans to film a Dutch novel, *A Day on the Beach*, and it might be shot in Denmark since it rains here every day. In addition he has had discussions with a producer from United Artists about the possibility of making a film with American backing. He has been offered a budget of \$3,000,000 to film a Conan Doyle novel, with freedom to change the script as he likes. Until now, Skolimowski has always based his films on his own scripts, but he argues that it will be an exciting challenge to shoot something on the basis of a script he has not written himself.

At the press conference Skolimowski avoided talking of the circumstances surrounding the banning of *Hands Up*, his fifth film, made in Poland in 1967 after *Le Départ*. In private he was more open.

"*Hands Up* is by far my best film.



Everyone who has seen it says so. I had complete freedom to make it exactly as I wanted. Nobody saw the rushes and nobody tried to force anything upon me. Consequently I was astonished when it was banned, but I still hope it will be released in the uncut version. It is a very ambitious film which will be understood differently in Poland and abroad. It is a provocation about political and social problems in Poland: a black film, not very explicit, with lots of allusions. The story line is realistic and non-realistic at the same time, but difficult to talk about. It is a kind of trip in the imagination.

"We meet an anonymous man who could be any of us. We start to examine his appearance—he has nice glasses, a valuable ring and a developing paunch. He is approximately thirty-five years old and graduated in medicine ten years ago. Then we take a look at the inside. What has he done with the best ten years of his life? He has lost them. He has lost all the ideals he had when he was a young student. The more established he has become, the more he has lost. His life consists of all the unimportant things surrounding him, and which he constantly replaces to achieve a kind of variation. He gets new cars, new houses, new wives. He is obsessed by owning things, not on a large scale like an American millionaire but on a small one. And this is typical of the generation he belongs to in Poland: the big ideas have been replaced by the little things.

"Ten years ago we were young in Poland. We were making a revolution, we fought Stalinism, and we believed in the future. People were fantastic at that time. We wanted to create something artistically, scientifically, politically. The world was open to us and we wanted to conquer it. But the older we have become, the smaller the world. Where are the ideas and the rage to live? *Hands Up* deals with these problems as well as other moral and political questions in Poland. Maybe that is why the censors are mixed up and are delaying its release. The film is both an accusation and an explanation of why it has become like this. It is at one and the same time a conclusion and an outcry. I suppose this sounds pretentious, but the film itself doesn't seem pretentious, that is why I can take the liberty of talking pretentiously about it.

"The leading character in *Hands Up* undertakes a train journey, not in an ordinary compartment but in a cattle truck. This is one of many metaphors in the film. He is travelling in a truck which is normally used only for cattle, and which was also used for the transportation of prisoners to the concentration camps during the war. If this happened twenty-five years ago and we were our parents, we had to fight for our lives. But today we don't fight any more, today we have this horrible lack of passion and engagement. The fact that this man is a doctor is another metaphor. His medical training enables him to

cure people physically, but they also need mental care. How can he treat other people for diseases from which he is suffering himself?

"If I were to represent *Hands Up* graphically, there would be very vehement and vigorous oscillations in the pattern, interrupted every now and then by soft and gentle wavy lines. People argue and quarrel a lot, and the points of view are brought up sharply against each other—not in *cinéma vérité* style, for I work in the very opposite way, although I too am a realist. The discussions tear along like a boxing match, and suddenly the film becomes quiet for a few moments, tender and lyric scenes with quiet music before the fight goes on. It is my best and most mature film, and it is not funny at all."

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Are you politically engaged outside your films?

"I'm not a member of the Polish Communist Party, but I'm not against the government either. After all, it is producing my films. Nor do I accept all government decisions, just as I do not accept everything from the West. I was born in Poland, my wife and child live there, my home is in Warsaw. That is where I belong. At the same time I'm very fond of travelling and making films outside Poland. I think it is good for me to change from Poland to other countries all the time. It widens my experience, and if I worked only in Poland I would risk repeating myself too much. When I return to Poland from abroad it is like seeing everything with a different pair of glasses.

"I do not think the artist necessarily has to commit himself politically. The only thing that counts is that he should be engaged in human beings—then he can leave politics to the politicians. I am a humanist, and the humanist scale is the only one you can use when you evaluate an artist. It is impossible to be a good artist without a humanistic attitude; and all my films are based on that attitude—that can hardly be questioned. But you can question whether, for instance, Jacopetti is a humanist. Not that I'm saying he isn't; I'm just saying the question can be raised."

In all your films you seem to have an extremely negative attitude towards the older generation.

"Well, don't you think I'm right? I can't think of any reasonable person over forty. You are right in suggesting that I'm dealing with the absolute lack of contact between the generations, and that is probably due to all the awful teachers I had at school. I never respected them. I think too that the generation problem is more serious in Poland than in many other countries, and it has its origins in the war. There is a division between those who have the war as a common experience and the rest. It wasn't only the soldiers who fought—everyone did. The war did something to these people who took

part, and the younger generation feel that they have been kept away from something. So they have reacted against the heroism of that time and against the worship of the past. We have not tried to sacrifice our lives for a cause. That is where the barrier is in Poland today."

Questioned as to what he thinks of Polish films about the war, Skolimowski says: "I don't make that kind of film myself, so guess what I think." He has previously referred to Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds* as the best Polish film ever made, but he does not want to say why: he just says that it has "the best script, the best direction, the best actor..." Nor has he anything to say about current Polish films. He says he never sees any. And asked the traditional but always interesting question, which films are his favourite ones, he says:

"I love professional American films, though I am well aware that the strength of my own films lies partly in their non-professional style. Three of my favourite films are *Citizen Kane*, *A Bout de Souffle* and *8½*. I like Polanski's films too, not only because he is a very good friend of mine. His best film is *Cul-de-Sac*. I am told that I am very influenced by Godard, but actually I had not seen a single film of his when I made *Rysopis* and *Walkover*. But I saw *Masculin Féminin*—of course—before I engaged Jean-Pierre Léaud, Catherine Duport and Willy Kurant for *Le Départ*."

You used to publish poems some years ago. Did you have any special reason for preferring films to literature?

"It is probably all due to my laziness. It is a lot easier to make films than it is to write books. Think how many words you need to explain what can be expressed by a single shot. At first I wrote scripts for Wajda, Polanski and others, and at that time I had no ambitions to become a director myself. But I realised rather quickly how troublesome it was to explain to others how I intended a particular scene to be done. I need no explanation at all when I direct my own scripts, and besides I can improvise all the time.

"Laziness lies behind everything I have done. It was because of laziness that I made my first film, *Rysopis*. At the film school I had to make short films to fulfil certain examination requirements, and I realised that if I linked up all these short films, I could have a feature film when I left the school. Then it would not be necessary to take a job as an assistant director or to make short films: I would have the proof that I could make a feature. That is how my first film was made, but it was not released until I was through with the shooting for *Walkover*. At that time there was no censorship problem, only a bureaucratic one. The authorities were simply so surprised to see that it was possible to make a feature that way that they didn't know what to do with it."

(Translated by Vibeke Klitgaard-Lund)

Italy sotto voce

Geoffrey
Nowell
Smith



"A FISTFUL OF DOLLARS".

"Contemporary developments in theoretical studies on the sound film imply the need to take up a position at the outset against the systematic abuse of dubbing, which consistently compromises the expressive values of the film. The actors themselves acquire from the habit of post-synchronisation (generally carried out with other people's voices) an increasing detachment from the character they are playing. The techniques of dubbing and the use of stock sound-effects deprive films of the support, on the unitary plane of style, of elements which should be integral to them, and at the same time they subject the film to manoeuvres and mystifications on the part of producers and distributors, whose final effect has an ideological character. The post-synchronisation of Italian films, when not required for expressive reasons, and the dubbing and translation of foreign films, are the two equally absurd and unacceptable sides of one and the same problem . . .

"The abolition of the indiscriminate use of dubbing, whose existence compromises the very possibility of an Italian sound cinema, is a vital aspect of the battle to safeguard linguistic research, to protect effective freedom of expression, and to realise and develop a total cinema."

ANTONIONI, BELLOCCHIO, BERTOLUCCI,
COTTAFAVI, DE SETA, LATTUADA, LEONARDI,
ORSINI, PASOLINI, PONTECORVO, B. RONDÌ,
ROSI, P. TAVIANI, V. TAVIANI

THIS MANIFESTO WAS presented to critics and public at a conference on film language and the sound film organised by the magazine *Filmcritica* and held at Amalfi last February. Behind the uncertainties of style, the document is interesting not only for what it says but for the fact that its formulation could be agreed upon by a group of directors representative of so many different tendencies, and whose collective experience covers so wide a range. The conference itself was not less wide-ranging, perhaps too much so, for in its attempts to cover all aspects of the sound film it tended at times to drift into irrelevance. For example one of the participants, a young film composer, after invoking Adorno and the distinction between music for concentration and music for distraction, launched into a frantic and apparently serious complaint that if he wrote proper concentration music for a film it was still only regarded as a distraction because the picture tended to get in the way of real musical appreciation. But such absurdities were rare. If discussion drifted a bit it was mainly for lack of a proper shared theory of the sound film. Since the object of the conference was to lay the bases for such a shared theory, its absence is hardly a fair cause for complaint.

The question of theory is important. In Italy, as in France, the links between theory and practice, and between critics and directors, have always been close. If recently they have shown signs of drifting apart it cannot be a matter for indifference. For if one thing is clear it is that the present catastrophic state of the Italian cinema, of which the abuse of dubbing is a symptom, cannot be remedied by empirical *laissez-faire*, but only by concerted action towards certain clearly specified artistic and ideological goals. At a moment when a crisis of ideas is coinciding with a crisis in the traditional economic structures of the Italian cinema industry, when the artists



"EDIPO RE": EPILOGUE IN MODERN BOLOGNA, WITH FRANCO CITTI AS THE BLIND OEDIPUS.

find themselves less and less in a position to determine their own future, the only people who stand to gain are the strongest and the least involved; not even the producers and distributors in Italy itself, but the box-office magnates and financiers in New York.

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To understand how this situation has come about, and the extent to which it is an inevitable consequence of the development of American capitalism and the extent to which Italian directors themselves, and their allies among producers, technicians and critics, are still in a position to modify the situation in a positive way, it is worth going into the question of dubbing in some detail. The issue is anything but trivial, for it affects the cinema at every level. It limits what the artist can do technically, the pattern of distribution, and the reception of films by the public and the critics. Then, by a process of feedback, it affects the artists themselves again in so far as they are also spectators and form their ideas on the basis of what they see.

Although the issue has only recently become a matter for urgent debate, the practice of dubbing, or more generally 'post-synchronisation', has been a feature of the Italian cinema since Fascism. The post-synchronisation of native films, often with different actors from those whose faces appear on the screen, has become an integral part of a cultural levelling process which began with the unification of Italy, attained the status of dogma under Mussolini, and is still going on. Most Italian actors do not speak the 'Tuscan tongue on Roman lips' that is officially regarded as a suitable means of universal communication. Most of them speak dialect, and it should be noted in passing that many of the Italian dialects are richer and more flexible instruments of communication than is the national language.

The dialect problem has two consequences. One is that the language spoken in many Italian films is essentially artificial, because it does not correspond to the way the majority of people talk in most parts of the country. (This problem, and its relation to the problem of realism, was clearly brought out in *La Terra Trema* twenty years ago.) The second consequence is that there has grown up a specialised corps of professional dubbers to provide the voices for those actors and actresses who, for one reason or another, are supposed to be incapable of speaking their lines properly. Certain actors of course dub themselves. Sordi, Gassman, Mastroianni, Anna Magnani

or Monica Vitti all depend on being heard as well as seen. But many actors are never heard with their own voices, and in any case, even when the voices are authentic, the chances are that the film has still been synchronised after the event and that the actors have been obliged to recreate in the studio a performance first gone through weeks before in front of the camera.

The habit of post-synchronisation grew up at a time when sound recording outside the studio was technically quite difficult. When the neo-realists took to the streets in search of authenticity, often without the resources for synch cameras and with primitive non-directional microphones, they almost always brought back the film for dubbing in the studio. Dubbing was cheap, because the import of American films for the mass market had brought into being equipment and expertise for dubbing them into Italian. With the rarest exceptions (such as Peter Brook's *Marat/Sade*) all foreign films are dubbed rather than subtitled, even those for a 'minority' or 'art' public. Here again a political factor can be discerned at the origins of the procedure, in this case the demands of Fascist censorship; and again the tendency is towards cultural levelling, but on a world-wide rather than a national scale.

Thus in the Italian version of Godard's *La Chinoise*, a reference to Nicholas Ray has been crassly transformed, for ease of assimilation, into a reference to Antonioni. British films come off particularly badly, partly because of the way British actors depend on their voices for expression and partly because the English hypersensitivity to details of accent and vocabulary has no parallel in Italian. The emotional charge which Tom Courtenay, under Losey's direction, gives to the monosyllable 'Sir!' in *King and Country* is completely lost, as can be imagined, in the translation into 'Sissignore'.

As a result of this process, although there are plenty of opportunities in Italy to see foreign films, the Italian spectator always has them presented to him in adulterated form: national differences, the specificities of social and cultural situations, are all ironed out. The final effect is of a culture both cosmopolitan and provincial. The concrete becomes abstract; and then, in an attempt to make the abstract concrete again, it is reduced to the homely and easily understood.

Although the most blatant examples of philistinism have happened with European films, it is the American cinema which provides the real touchstone of the effects of dubbing.

The majority of foreign films, excluding co-productions, are American, and dubbing these films for the mass market has developed into a fine art. Given the scale and efficiency of the industry and the universal penetration of American culture, neither technical difficulties nor the problems of cross-cultural references can be pleaded as an excuse for the harm perpetrated on American movies by dubbing. On a technical level everything is fine. Actors whose voices are distinctive and essential, whether Jerry Lewis, Judy Holliday, Walter Brennan or whoever, tend to be dubbed by a single specialist. Recognised equivalents have grown up for characteristic jargon and technical terms of American culture, so that there is now a particular linguistic code for translating American genres such as the Western.

But it is precisely in the development of this code that the limitations of dubbing begin to make themselves felt. For one aspect of the code is its indifference to the specific data of the American situation in which a genre like the Western is rooted. Thus Union and Confederate become 'nordista' and 'sudista', neutral geographical terms but with just a suspicion of an Italian overtone. (Feudal South and proto-capitalist North, slaves in one and railroads in the other: the temptation is to read the Civil War in terms of the Risorgimento.) With the social and political references effectively masked, the variety of the Western convention becomes mere confusion. This is of direct importance for directors like Ford, whose Westerns are consciously (though never pedantically) historical, but it is indirectly important for the genre as a whole, because, even if one accepts the rather reactionary theory that the Western is about 'values', it is essential to know at least what kind of values one is dealing with.

The loss of concreteness and precision affects not only historical and contemporary content (Ford, Tashlin, Wilder) but also style. With Hawks, for example, where the emphasis is more on the 'how' than the 'what' of narration, dubbing tends to produce an effect on the harmony of his films analogous to the effect that insensitive cuts have on the rhythm. Dubbed into Italian, Hawksian dialogue often reveals itself as excruciatingly banal. For no dubbing, however proficient, can hope to recapture the sense of appropriateness that Hawks can impart to a particular variant of the most conventional phrase, spoken with a certain timing and a certain intonation just fractionally different from the normal. With historical depth, exactitude and individual genius equally at a discount, the stage is set for the development of those incredible bastard genres, the Italian Western and American Comedy, Italian Style.

* * *

The situation so far described is more or less conventional. It has been going on for many years and is not unique to Italy. Events of the past few years, however, have introduced a new and more sinister factor, which is the internationalisation of the European cinema industry, centred on Cinecittà. This internationalisation has two aspects. One is the inability of Italian producers to cover their costs on the home market alone, which has led to the growth of co-production (and therefore parallel distribution) with other European countries, generally those of the Common Market, but also Yugoslavia and Spain; the second is the decline of Hollywood and the invasion of Europe by American capital. The former is generally felt to be economically quite beneficial, in that it has to a certain extent 'stabilised the market' and made it less vulnerable to sudden fluctuations of taste. Artistically its effects are for the most part fairly neutral: it is not a process about which one can be either very enthusiastic or very angry, at least not yet.

The American invasion, on the other hand, does manage to make people angry, or at the best bitterly cynical. The Italian cinema has, effectively speaking, sold itself to the Americans for a handful of dollars. The Americans were keen to buy because high costs and a shrinking domestic market had made production in and for America alone uneconomic, or at least not very profitable. And the Italians were happy to sell

because the industry was in its usual state of crisis and the influx of foreign capital would help to stave off collapse. But as time passes and the dependence of the Italian cinema on American money becomes more and more a form of colonial subjection, even the economic arguments begin to look suspect. Too late, people are beginning to wonder whether American capital has really saved anything. For not only do the profits extracted from successful films tend to find their way back to New York, thus depriving the Italian industry of financial advantage, but the kind of production which the Americans have succeeded in imposing is hopelessly at variance with any conception of an Italian cinema in a national cultural sense.

The abuse of dubbing highlights the issue clearly. In Italy today any film that is made with American capital or with an American distributor's guarantee must first be shot in English and then dubbed into Italian for the home market. This rule does not just apply to 'international' films shot by American companies in Italian studios, but to films of any description over which the Americans have any say. A film shot in Italian is unexportable outside Europe. Not only will it not be shown in America, but it is unlikely to find distribution outlets in the rest of the world either.

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The upshot of these developments is that the bulk of Italian film production is growing more synthetic and phoney than ever. How excruciatingly bad some of this production can be is something which in England is hardly guessed at, because the worst films have hitherto not been exported. In future, however, they probably will be exported, and they will probably be even worse. Cottafavi is getting old, but the other specialists of the 'peplum' will doubtless survive the new structures. So will Antonioni and Fellini, provided they remain cosmopolitan (and make their films in colour so that they can be shown on American television). But the others—Pasolini, Rosi, Maselli, Bellocchio, Bertolucci, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani?

Hitherto the great strength of the Italian cinema has lain in the fact that large numbers of young directors were at least able to make a start. They had a place in a system which they contested. Now, however, the situation is that if you have a place in the system you mustn't contest, and if you contest you don't have a place. Francesco Rosi represents a prime example of the schizophrenia affecting the semi-established director in this situation. His last film, *C'era una volta* (*More than a Miracle*), was a gorgeous historical spectacular with Sophia Loren and Omar Sharif and a great commercial success. His next film will be about Che Guevara, and will probably not make money. Meanwhile Bertolucci has not made a film for four years, preferring to make television documentaries or write uncredited scripts rather than put his name to a film production which will not be genuinely his own. Other younger directors have been submerged in television or commercial production and are unlikely to reappear.

Only Pasolini seems happy, pursuing his own ideas and finding the means to realise them on film. *Edipo Re*, about which, together with other films, I hope to write in another article, is a fantastic creation, beautiful, dramatic, and at the same time perhaps the most *intellectual* film (documentary excluded) that has ever been made. *Edipo* is profoundly influenced by Godard, and it is to the example of Godard that the Italians are all looking at the moment, not only for the kind of films he makes but for the fact that he makes them at all.

To be able to make films cheaply, without compromise, to be able to develop new forms of language using or not using advanced techniques as one thinks fit, to express a modern crisis in modern forms, to be able to denounce Cinecittà not only in manifestos but in action: all these things are rabidly envied. Technically and artistically they are easier than they used to be; industrially and commercially they are growing harder every year.



Max Kozloff

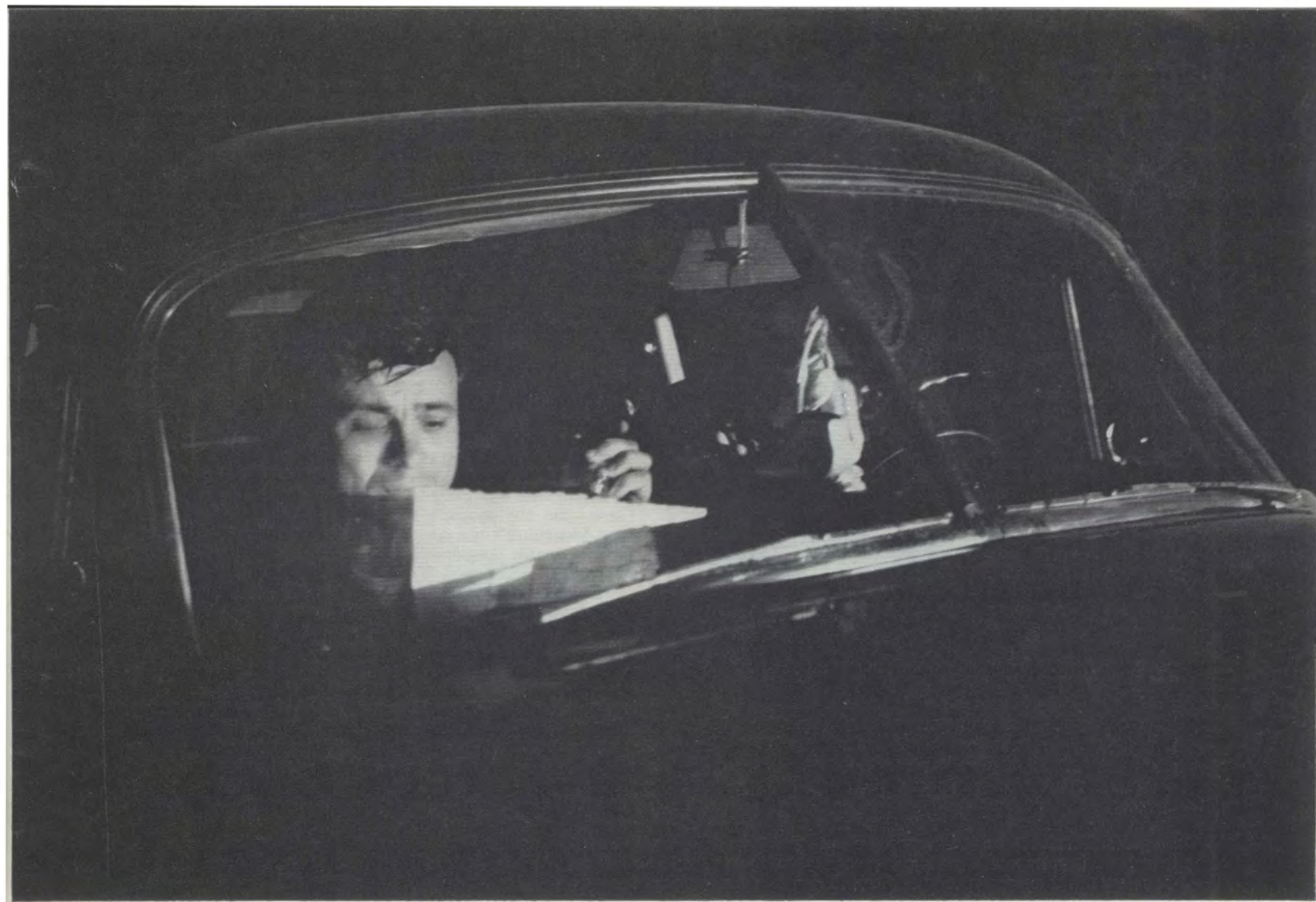
IN COLD BLOOD

IF IT HAD NOT BEEN for the affair of Lee Harvey Oswald, Richard Brooks' film version of *In Cold Blood* would have lacked urgency, as it surely lacks cinematic distinction. In their commentary so far, some critics have quite justly picked apart its conventionality and its slickness, yet without recognising that it deals, whether consciously or not, with an alarming and ever more central experience of our times. For here Capote has depicted the berserk but nondescript killer in the American crowd. Not the criminal who blends into the crowd, not the desperado who stands always apart from it, but the psychopathic individual who is *of* the crowd itself—or rather, the mob.

Without a sense of class or vocation, without origin in a stable family, without a grasp of or interest in reality, this rootless and romantic but above all average man dominates the screen. It is an indication of how representative an American type is Perry Smith that Brooks accords him the dramatic place of honour, subduing even what has been called the 'pornography of violence' to the attempt to bring this recalcitrant material alive. The contrast between the banality of such a person and his capacity for insane deeds, bewildering in its huge discrepancy between human cause and effect, is the theme of this film.

No less modern (despite the fact that it was adapted from a book published in 1942, and rendering a story situated in the 1930s) is the comparison offered by Luchino Visconti's re-creation of Camus' *The Outsider* (*L'Etranger*). Its 'hero', Meursault, pointlessly and motivelessly assassinates a fellow human being. But whereas Capote-Brooks ask who is Smith,

ABOVE: MASTROIANNI IN "THE OUTSIDER".
RIGHT: "IN COLD BLOOD", ROBERT BLAKE.



Camus-Visconti question the meaning or the non-meaning of taking life. Meursault, the shipping clerk, may be as archetypally ordinary, in his way, as Smith, he may also be as alienated from society and purpose, but he is not predisposed to lash back—which makes his act ambiguously accidental or terrible. Yet we do not feel that society is as much at the mercy of such a man as it is vulnerable to his American counterpart. On the contrary, French Algiers victimises Meursault, not by meting out an execution he can't accept (though it is truly terrifying), but ironically, by basing it on his indifference to the death of his mother. Meursault and his judges, on one side marked by an anaesthetised goodwill, and on the other by limitless hypocrisy, are incomprehensible to each other. In Kansas, however, the opposing forces are in perfect communication: society, the breeding ground of chronic mal-content, must take its revenge on its own child.

But the issue is not, or only secondarily, the narrative fate of a character. It is rather the moral stance from which these films view similarly destructive acts. How paradoxical that Meursault's internal self-redemption—the realisation that he had been happy—has the effect of giving to his story the validity and generality of an idea. It is as if the personal ability to recall the harmony of his organism as it received physical sensations lifted this man out of himself, conveying a pride in having lived almost abstract in its force. With his implication that the redemption would never have occurred without the crime, Camus perhaps resurrects a kind of Christian morality. But if so, it is a morality without God or sin. At a certain late moment, even the problem of guilt is

shown to be irrelevant in the face of how it is that one chooses to die. "Considering the freedom of murder," writes Camus in a 1947 notebook, "there is no freedom possible other than the freedom to die; in other words, suppressing fear of death and giving that accident its place in the natural order of things." It is as absurd that the Arab was deprived of his choice, or better his attitude toward death, as it is meaningful that Meursault is obliged to overcome his fear of it. His inability to forgive himself provides the 'stranger', at long last, with joy. For he is able to accept responsibility for, and perceive meaning in, one act among the chaos of pointless accidents that had been his life.

* * *

As for *In Cold Blood*, the very title suggests that however circumstantial, the events it depicts are hardly accidental. And by this I do not refer to the obvious fact that the murder of the Clutter family was largely engineered by Perry's partner, Dick Hickock. Between Smith and his environment there was slated to be nothing but incessant warfare. Or, as Capote puts it, quoting a psychiatric report: "Such individuals can be considered to be murder-prone in the sense of either carrying a surcharge of aggressive energy or having an unstable ego defence system that periodically allows the naked and archaic expression of such energy." How, when, or on whom this aggressive energy is discharged can never be predetermined; but such discharge itself is inevitable. This inevitability lends a dramatic flatness to the tale, all the more reinforced by the continued immunity of the murderer from any threat of contrition. (Americans are not wont to die for the sake of an



"IN COLD BLOOD": ROBERT BLAKE, SCOTT WILSON, PAUL STEWART (FAR RIGHT) AS THE NEWSPAPER REPORTER.

idea, or even, often enough, under the influence of one.) Dramatically static, by virtue of the fixed psychology of the protagonist, *In Cold Blood* is also, or pretends to be, morally neutral, by extension of its clinical tone and documentary approach.

Yet this detachment is illusory. Whereas Camus regenerates a criminal back to the level where he need no longer flinch before author or reader, indicting society in the process, Capote exhibits an unregenerate killer, indifferent to judgment, who is, of course, rightfully condemned. A flurry of debate about the propriety of capital punishment (more evident in the film than the book), does not detract from this aspect of the work as a shut case. *The Outsider* ends with a question; *In Cold Blood* terminates with an answer. The hangman's name, says Brooks' reporter, is 'We the people.'

By pedantically recording the events surrounding an actual killing, Capote is released from underlining his obvious agreement with the bourgeois consensus. And by replaying the historical tape, as it were, he can coldly accommodate the middle class need to be entertained, without acknowledging the abiding level of prurience in his reportage. Worse still, both author and director not only sidestep the chance of achieving a work of art, they even fail to raise an issue. With the anthropological gusto typical of a *New Yorker* article dealing with 'lower life', the Capote study of abnormality lets everyone off the hook, precisely because it is a study of abnormality.

Richard Brooks has visualised an already adaptable text with glossy and completely conventional competence. The few liberties he takes in the screenplay are for purposes of innuendo and reflex-jabbing. An example of the latter is the brief displacement of the hangman's face by that of Perry's father. In general, however, one regrets that more cinematic initiative wasn't taken. The choleric ingredients of the story—made up of thievery, vagabondage, latent homosexuality, the open road, hysteria—are so rich that they could have been as quickly triggered into myth as they were into tabloid murder. Dismissing their sexual mania as just one of several confused character traits amounting to a general hostility against the world, Brooks smudges the most telling feature of his protagonists. For it is a fact that could only have been approached as myth, that Perry Smith is Huck Finn as cut-throat. But it is precisely the flashbacks of his prairie memories that ring false,

lack credibility, in the factual matrix of the film's style. Yet even this style, with its crashing music, its privileged back seat views, its flip elisions, is about as documentary as Lumet in *The Pawnbroker* or Preminger in *Anatomy of a Murder*.

Brooks is just flexible enough to make Perry a cliché television hood, yet so dependent on his source as to give Perry's apprehension, interrogation (a better than average bit), trial and execution—and for that matter the murder as well—the quality of dreary anti-climax. In the unintentional but inevitable coldness of the resulting treatment, Robert Blake, playing Perry, though he honourably acquits himself, perhaps takes second place to Scott Wilson as Hickock, an actor who, not being charged with such composite demands nor under so central a focus, renders to perfection the role of a very nasty flibbertigibbet.

* * *

I wish I could say that *The Outsider* fared better in its film form. Obviously Visconti had on his hands a novel many of whose details begged to be translated into visuals—were especially cast and chiselled to appeal to the sense of sight. These—the old people's home, the beach scenes, the view from Meursault's balcony, sweaty, vulnerable flesh, above all the inescapable presence of the sun—Visconti has brought off with laconic excellence. (This, after all, was to be expected of the director of *The Leopard* and *Senso*.) To the extent that such details convey the carnal or oppressive environment essential to Camus, the film is on a level with its model. Moreover, the fast pacing, unstrained evocation of time and place, and telephoto framing (if not the poor colour processing), are resourceful in their own right. But *The Outsider* is also a scrutiny of an internal change of consciousness, a novel of ideas, and here, with his off-screen narration and static finale, the director fails to vivify meaning, much less grasp Camus' special reciprocity of idea and sensation.

Just when Meursault goes through his climactic reversal, interest peters out of the imagery and we are left feeling that we are hearing a book recited. More important still, being a barer of ideas, a man who presumably exists to give point to a particular dreadful situation, Meursault is made deliberately hard 'to see' in the novel. For maximum effectiveness, it is proper that he be a set of reactions without a memorable face. Under these circumstances, you do not cast that handsome wastrel, Marcello Mastroianni, as 'The Outsider'. This total misunderstanding will never be rectified by a well-intentioned performance, even if it were not accompanied by a completely unidiomatic elegance and contemporaneity. The spectator is more inclined to sympathise with an appealing man playing a difficult and unlikely role, than he is to give credence to a specific human predicament.

It is tempting to draw some tentative conclusions about these disparate film attacks on a mutual theme. Had Camus tuned in Meursault's schizophrenia, he would have lost the philosophic ambiguity and comprehensiveness so pungent in his novel. But if Capote had been willing to extrapolate those elements in his killers that make them not exclusive but typical representatives of a national psychosis (crimes or emotions like theirs now being the rage), then the genesis of their minds and the enormity of their deeds would furnish some parallels. For on a much grander scale than supposed, an 'unstable ego defence' periodically discharges an archaic aggressive energy, of which Oswald and Richard Speck are already classic examples. More than that, he would have articulated the abstracting of the human, and the cheapness with which life is held, conditions rebuked by *The Outsider* and now firmly established in the American bloodstream.

There is no comparison between the hypocritical society in the European work and the maddened one lying beneath the surface of the American work. But these are socio-political implications which Capote, despite his willing subject, never chose to explore. That Brooks, too, muffed them, means only that we must still wait for a cinema revelation of what Hannah Arendt called 'the banality of evil'. Nothing less would be required to give us as expressively murderous a vision of our world as Fritz Lang's *M* was for his.

FILM REVIEWS

WEEK-END

1. On ne peut dépasser L'HORREUR DE LA BOURGEOISIE que par plus d'horreur encore.

ON THE BALCONY of an elegant suburban apartment two men and a woman stand sipping drinks—an embodiment of, almost an advertisement for, the consumer society in which they live. The wife sends her husband off to phone her mother and beckons to the other man. The façade begins to crack. While Corinne (Mireille Darc) and her lover complain that, after all they have done to his brakes, her husband (Jean Yanne) has still not crashed his car, the husband Roland whispers down the phone to his mistress that they must be patient: after the sleeping pills and the gas, Corinne is getting suspicious and the important thing is to get the mother's money first. Down below, there is a scraping of bumpers and a tricolor image ironically fills the screen as the driver of a blue and white mini is almost beaten to death by the occupants of a large red car. And then, in a scene of quite extraordinary erotic beauty, shot against the light so that her face is barely outlined, Corinne lies in her underwear on a desk at which her lover takes notes, and describes, hesitantly but with clinical detachment, her recent participation in a triangular orgy whose climax was reached as a man broke eggs between her legs while defecating into a bowl of milk.

Using the shock tactics of guerrilla warfare, Godard has established the horror of the bourgeoisie. And one of the most remarkable achievements of *Week-End* (Connoisseur) is that far from lapsing into anticlimax, it rises from horror to horror. The whimsical references to murder in the opening sequence give way to the indiscriminate butchery of the autoroutes and an apocalyptic vision of a blood-drenched countryside strewn with burning wrecks and mutilated bodies; though by the time Corinne, after meticulously cleaning her finger nails in a brand-name bubble bath, has helped hack her mother to death with a butcher's knife, Godard even has us looking back with a kind of affectionate

nostalgia to the agreeable impersonality of death on the roads. And when an obscene cook, his white robes smeared with blood, officiates at the rites of the FLSO (Seine et Oise Liberation Front) by breaking eggs between a girl's legs before raping her with an enormous fish, the orgy Corinne described appears in retrospect as the highest expression of a civilised society.

For one result of the sheer physical daring of Godard's assault upon his audience is to force that audience into a certain complicity with his totally unpleasant and insensitive characters (Corinne and Roland, their very names evocative of the lost ideals of Romantic passion and mediaeval chivalry). The corpses littering the roadside quickly lose their shock value and become—for us as for them—as inevitable a part of the landscape as the trees and fields. By the time the couple have arrived at the mother's farm, we are more distressed by the sight of a skinned rabbit than by all the carnage on the highway. And it is here that Godard makes his strongest attack on 'civilised' society. While we are still swallowing our squeamish distaste at the spectacle of natural (and biblically sanctioned) slaughter, Godard inundates the rabbit's body with pint upon pint of the mother's blood, then follows this with a sequence in which a pig has its throat cut and a duck, decapitated, goes on beating its wings moments after death. And partly because the animals' blood is real, and partly because we are used to averting our eyes from what goes on in the slaughter-house and the farmyard, our sympathy stays with the animals. The final sequence—which has outraged most audiences, or at least those who have stayed long enough to see it—evolves logically from our own bad faith. Corinne, now one of the guerrilla hippies, eats a fricassee of left-over pork and English tourist, with some pieces of her husband thrown in for good measure.

For *Week-End* is in part a confrontation between the *femme mariée* and the young revolutionaries of *La Chinoise*; and though Godard begins by acknowledging our voyeurism (tantalisingly bringing Antoine Duhamel's disturbing music up over the dialogue for Corinne's scatological con-

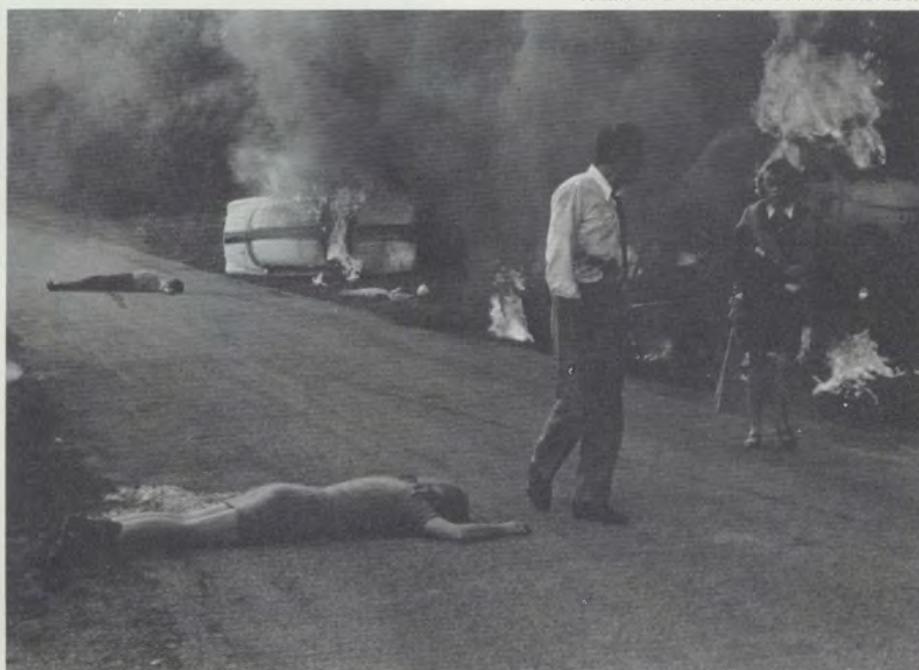
fessions), he ultimately denies us the privileged neutrality of the spectator and forces us to choose between the two moralities. This choice, between revolution and materialism, Mao and Johnson, is also presented as a choice between civilisation (its discontents and injustices brilliantly embodied in the Negro and Algerian dustmen who empty its garbage cans) and nature. But while every frame of Raoul Coutard's breathtaking photography attests the supremacy of nature over society, nature itself is no longer synonymous with isolation and retreat. Pierrot's desert island has been infiltrated by the young activists, in whom Godard sees a positive alternative to the complacency of the UNR.

2. Les Exploitants du Cinéma en Guerre contre ce Pauvre B.B.

A prisoner exchange (one of the many Vietnam metaphors) degenerates into a gun battle with echoes of a hundred Westerns. The girl-friend of the FLSO leader—her cheeks formalistically daubed with artificial blood—leans back in her lover's arms (echoes of Valentino here) and sings a ballad of farewell before expiring gracefully. The flash title FAUX RACCORD shatters the mood. The grief-stricken lover shrugs his shoulders, and grabbing the hostage he has just surrendered by the hand, leads her back into the forest with him.

Besides bearing out Claire Clouzot's remark that Godard's idyll with the American cinema is over, this sequence clearly illustrates the principle of auto-destruction which governs all the scenes that take place outside the couple's apartment. For each of their successive encounters with the world outside themselves serves systematically to annihilate the illusory reality of the previous encounter, to remind us that what we've been watching was only a film. Once Corinne and Roland have embarked on their nightmarish journey, they become—in one of the phrases Godard uses to introduce his film—'égaré(s) dans le cosmos', two picaresque characters (for they alone in the film have any density or consistency) moving through a landscape peopled with actors.

"WEEK-END": DEATH ON THE ROADS.



When Corinne feels a momentary revulsion after Roland has set fire to Emily Bronte dressed as Alice in Wonderland, he tells her it doesn't matter, she was only a 'personnage imaginaire'; and indeed, a few moments later, she—or at any rate Blandine Jeanson—reappears, in modern dress now, leaning on the piano at the extraordinary farmyard concert. Juliet Berto, first seen delivering a funeral oration over the body of her fascist boy-friend ('il était riche, il était beau, il avait la priorité sur tout'), pops up again with a sub-machine gun in the guerrilla army; Jean-Pierre Léaud walks off the screen dressed as Saint Just and declaiming an apposite text ('Car je ne vois nulle part la douce humanité et l'équitable modération qui doit être à la base de tout contrat social'), only to reappear in an adjacent field as a contemporary capitalist crooning an ironically worded love song ('Je t'appelle dans le vide') down the phone.

A more complex process governs the annihilation of the miracle-working hitch-hiker. (Called Joseph Balsamo after a Dumas charlatan; for Godard has found a new and humorous application for his passion for citations. Many of the characters are—like Saint Just—simply walking quotations, and Gros Poucet, whom the couple meet in the forest, has quotations pinned all over his clothes.) Corinne and Roland are driving along, arguing about what the weather will do next. Roland thinks it will rain and Corinne doesn't. A flash title announces the day and time, then in blinding rain a flower-power Balsamo and girl-friend hi-jack the car and demand a lift to London. Balsamo establishes his credentials as a miracle worker and Roland and Corinne articulate their dearest wishes—a better car, naturally blonde hair, a week-end with James Bond (these, after all, are the aspirations that will drive them on to murder). Then another title, and the couple are alone again, with Corinne triumphantly remarking 'tu vois, il y a du soleil.' By implication, the previous scene never existed; at any rate, Godard has caused it to disappear as totally as the wrecked cars that Balsamo turned to sheep.

In this instant destruction of his creations, Godard goes beyond a mere application of Brechtian theory. *Week-End* is not simply another film about the nature of film—nothing in it exists when it is not being looked at—but a form, or formlessness, perfectly fitted to its subject (the dissolution of human loyalties, the destructions perpetrated in the name of civilisation). Its characters are annihilated, but the ideas behind them remain. The ideas. And the poetry.

3. Je te salue, Océan . . .

It is not only the imaginary characters, or the fact that each scene turns instantly to metaphor, that makes *Week-End* Godard's most poetic film to date, somewhere between Swift and Samuel Beckett. The eerie matt green of the idyllic interludes. The ACTION MUSICALE sequence, in which Godard twice moves his camera through a 180° arc, while Paul Gégauff performs a Mozart sonata for the benefit of a few farm labourers (door to door art, the solution to *La Chinoise*). The forest concert, at which the voice of a guerrilla tonelessly reciting a Romantic invocation to the sea is gradually muffled by a hippy drum solo as the camera rises to reflect the stillness of the lake. The corpse-strewn carnival of the traffic jam, captured in a single tracking shot lasting

17 minutes and accompanied by an unremitting chorus of klaxons, until the blast of a policeman's whistle abruptly terminates the rhythmic counterpointing of mechanical slapstick and bloodied bodies.

For *Week-End* is poetic in its structures as well as its imagery, alternately violent and tender, humorous and cruel. A dialectic poem, a revolutionary film. Indeed the Cannes Festival fiasco and the student initiative in the French strikes provide a timely endorsement of Godard's recurring themes—the inseparability of politics and art, politics and education.

JAN DAWSON

MOUCHETTE

AFTER THE MANIFOLD splendours of *Balthazar*, *Mouchette* seems an altogether thinner experience, exquisite but frail, as though Bresson this time had chosen to tell only the story of Marie without the counterpoint of Balthazar. Unlike the earlier film, which develops as a series of concentric circles spreading from the tethered souls of Marie and Balthazar, *Mouchette* (Contemporary) drives straight as an arrow towards its inevitable end in *Mouchette's* abdication from life. Everything is said in the opening sequence as, watched over tormentedly by *Mouchette's* dying mother, an anonymous hand stealthily sets a snare and a trapped partridge fights stubbornly, painfully, tightening the noose which will strangle it. It only remains for *Mouchette* to fulfil her destiny by struggling against the snare which poverty and indifference have set for her. Compare the opening of *Balthazar* in which the children gaze in wonder at the infant donkey, and which barely hints at the complex, interlocked spiritual process—Marie descending, Balthazar ascending—which will be the subject and style of the film.

No doubt the difference in texture between the two films is largely illusory—after all, it isn't every day one finds a

protagonist with as many built-in reverberations as Balthazar—but it does exist. Magnificent as it is, for instance, *Mouchette's* moment of transcendent joy among the dodgem cars pales into insignificance beside the almost mystic scene where Marie garlands Balthazar with flowers in the moonlight and plants a secret kiss on his muzzle. One is simply an intimation of human attraction; the other is . . . many things, none of them reducible to words without stumbling into banality.

At the same time, by any other standards than *Balthazar*, *Mouchette* is a masterpiece: a Bresson film pure and simple with its extraordinary correspondances between sound and gesture to evoke the unspoken and the unseen. No one but Bresson, for instance, could have conceived that extraordinary dialogue between hands, veiled eyes and inanimate objects which pinpoints the triangle relationship between Arsène, Louisa and the gamekeeper. And no one but Bresson, surely, could have imagined the extraordinary ritual of the ending, which offers *Mouchette* three chances of salvation but leaves her to find her own grace in death.

The real importance of *Mouchette*, however, is that it confirms a new departure in Bresson's work which began with *Balthazar*. Always a solitary, the Bresson hero has hitherto lived apart, in a world almost of his creation, isolated not only by circumstance but by his own nature. For Lieutenant Fontaine, for instance, the fact of imprisonment is only half his solitude; the other springs from his Bressonian need to seek himself within himself. With Marie and *Mouchette*, Bresson describes a different kind of solitude: one which exists within the world rather than apart from it, and which is resisted rather than courted. (Marie and *Mouchette*, with their wistful love/hate attraction to other people, are never even temporarily sufficient unto themselves in contemplation like Fontaine or the country priest.) Ultimately, the earlier heroes all achieve a kind of reconciliation with the world, whether they leave it like the priest and Joan of Arc, or re-enter it like Fontaine and Michel the pickpocket.

"WEEK-END": SEINE ET OISE LIBERATION FRONT.



But for Marie and Mouchette there is no reconciliation: after fighting tooth and nail for survival against society, they retire defeated but undaunted.

Accordingly, the Bresson landscape has changed. Formerly a reflection of the protagonist's mental state, it is now completely at odds with him (or rather, her). Only secondarily a real city, the Paris of *Pickpocket* is primarily an abstraction echoing Michel's obsession, in which the same Métro station and the same anonymous crowd constantly recur, just as the village in *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* is primarily a *correspondance* for the young priest's dark night of the soul. In *Balthazar* and *Mouchette*, however, the landscapes are first, foremost and always *real*.

It was something of a shock, as most critics duly noted, to find with *Balthazar* that the tinny emblems of modern living had finally encroached upon Bresson's spiritual domain. Undoubtedly the transistors, scooters and juke-boxes which figure so prominently in *Balthazar* lend a more urgent, tangible presence to the world described; but they are, I think, less important in themselves (they do not reappear in *Mouchette*) than as a signpost to Bresson's new concern with the physical world of objects. A motor-cycle figures in *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*, but it is there to illuminate the priest's sense of exclusion from the normal pleasures of youth; there is a close-up of a gear-shift in *Un Condamné à Mort*, but it is there as a key to escape from a moving car. In these films, which concentrate so closely on the inner world that the outer one is reduced—whether figuratively or literally—to four blank walls, objects are important chiefly for their symbolic connotations, like the spoon, secretly treasured and sharpened to a point by Fontaine in *Un Condamné à Mort*, which represents the possibility of escape.

In *Mouchette*, as in *Balthazar*, the apprehension of the physical world is extraordinarily acute, both visually and aurally. Apparently irrelevant shots—close-ups of glasses on a counter, of the headlamps on a lorry, of the gamekeeper's hands as he talks to Louisa—are given an inexplicable, lowering significance, precisely because the objects seen are autonomous, completely without symbolism. Like the squalor of the village and the beauty of the surrounding countryside, they are simply there, impartial witnesses to rather than actors in *Mouchette*'s tragedy. So, too, with the soundtrack. Throughout the film, Bresson's distrust of the actor seems to have spread to the spoken word. Dialogue is kept to a minimum, replaced by vivid, almost tangible noises—the clinking of bottles, traffic roaring past on the unseen highway, shattering china—to a point where emotions are so completely conveyed by gestures, sounds and objects that a non-French speaker would have no difficulty in understanding *Mouchette* even without subtitles. *Mouchette*'s love of her mother and hatred of her father, for instance, is conveyed almost entirely by tonalities: of gesture as *Mouchette* unconsciously and almost imperceptibly shifts her stance before mother and father; of sound, as a curious kind of tranquillity, undisturbed by either the mother's groans or the baby's crying, is strangely shattered when the father enters drunk, goes straight to bed, and lies there quietly amusing himself by imitating a lorry.

This process of exteriorisation, shifting the emphasis from the malleability of the Christian soul to the implacable indifference



"MOUCHETTE": NADINE NORTIER.

of the Christian world, leads Bresson not into black pessimism as one might have expected, but to an undefined, almost pantheistic heresy. Rejected by her parents, stripped and beaten by her former lover and his friends, Marie finds redemption in the death of Balthazar among the sheep on the mountainside; so, too, one feels assured, does *Mouchette*—perhaps in the sunlight sparkling on the waters that close over her head. I doubt whether the image of the Cross could close these two films as it does *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* and *Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*; but for the first time the epilogue might read, with complete accuracy, 'Tout est grâce.'

TOM MILNE

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

ALREADY, IT SEEMS, there exist third generation computers so complex that they have had to be constructed and programmed by other computers, in turn developed by comparatively primitive man-made originals. Isaac Asimov has foreseen a future in which this growing family of artifacts will take over our planet completely, replacing with cold logic the expendable and inefficient human race. On one level at least, Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (M-G-M) follows this extrapolation to the point at which man becomes at best an outmoded spectator of laws and forces spectacularly beyond his comprehension.

More sinister still, Kubrick also extends the theory retrospectively by showing mankind in its simian infancy being indoctrinated by possibly the identical omniscient slab that is later to confront and confound us on the enigmatic surface of Jupiter. This imputation that man could not have invented even as pedestrian a robot as, say, a traffic light without the aid of a hefty nudge from superior beings has not surprisingly been the source of considerable pleasure as much to the UFO-spotters as

to the Bible-readers in Kubrick's audiences. Whatever one's theory of evolution, however, the Kubrick-Clarke screenplay doesn't really bear analysis any too well.

The film begins unexpectedly with the title 'The Dawn of Man', and ends equally unexpectedly with a sequence which implies that the opening label was an ironic one. As an interplanetary dawn breaks somewhere over Jupiter, contemplated by the staring eyes of a foetus travelling in its own fixed orbit, we are supposedly now present at the *real* birth of human knowledge. The trouble with this line of thought (assuming it's the right one) is that if man was so dim initially that it would take a few million years of prompting to make him realise merely that he is as an unborn child before the mysteries of the universe, one can't help wondering why any outside force, however benevolent, would have bothered to take on his schooling in the first place. Boredom, perhaps. Or the need for an appreciative audience? Worse, if it's man's *natural* progress that is being accelerated by carefully timed appearances of the singing monoliths, the haste of this spoon-fed rush to maturity is scarcely justified by the film's conclusion that we've not yet begun. If, on the other hand, the suggestion is that man would never have developed at all without outside help, the film is reducing us to mutant freaks, purposelessly nurtured and cultivated.

Perhaps it is being too severe on *Space Odyssey* to submit it to this type of *reductio ad absurdum*. Yet thematically, however one looks at the film's four linked episodes, the efforts of its characters emerge as singularly futile. Given the brainwave of using a bone as a weapon for food, the apeman's first act is to club one of his own kind with it. Given the facility of space-travel and the awesome splendour of the solar system, the twenty-first century man dozes, gossips, makes banal remarks about sandwiches, and takes snapshots. Given the technology to create a superhuman computer that does all but scratch the astronaut's back while controlling his entire spaceship, the human discovers nevertheless that he has to dis-mantle the thing in order to survive at all.



"2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY": MONOLITH ON THE MOON.

And finally the blazing display of alien concepts reduces man to an inarticulate embryo. Kubrick has always pushed men to extremes in his films, finding them in the last resort incapable, and with the immense canvas of *Space Odyssey* he again appears to be expressing that vote of no confidence which has been, after all, the constant theme of most written science-fiction.

Granted this gloomy forecast, however, the film manages to come out as irrationally optimistic on another level—that of the sheer audacity of the human race. It once took man ten thousand years to double his store of knowledge, but only fifteen years ago the rate of doubling was one decade and today it is expected that a mere seven years should cover the same process. Whether the first spark came from elsewhere or not, the film demonstrates a wholehearted human eagerness to take full advantage of this innate human ability, summarised particularly stunningly by the shot of a ball-like spaceship sinking majestically into its landing bay in the surface of the moon while tiny figures supervise calmly from a hive of observation points.

A signal from another planet finds a group of men quickly ready to respond, hibernation techniques and all; an astronaut adrift in space is tracked down and collected with hardly a second thought; and a berserk, seemingly inviolable computer is demolished as a result of the quicksilver ingenuity of its intended victim. The opportunism of man is undeniable, even if so much of his effort is wasted on banalities, and *Space Odyssey* demonstrates his resilience convincingly enough for one to interpret the film's final hint of rebirth as heralding a challenge that at long last will be worth the challenging.

What really undermines the film's whole thesis of man's dependence upon other-worldly forces is, of course, the film's own existence. As Arthur Clarke has said, if the next space picture is going to be better than *Space Odyssey* it will have to be made on location. With a battery of special effects designed by Kubrick himself, the universe has been astonishingly recreated and, further, populated: no strings, no visible backdrops, and only a few, almost indistinguishable touches of process work.

With his multi-million dollar investment, the entire resources of the M-G-M British studios and some of Shepperton's as well, his ninety tons of specially dyed sand, and his thirty-six foot high centrifuge, Kubrick has won the ultimate technical triumph in that his film is beautiful to watch from start to finish.

If there was any doubt that space travel will be the most spectacular adventure of mankind's future, *Space Odyssey* is the definitive affirmation that every last coin spent on the space race will be worth it. His camera dances in an unrestrained love affair with the planets and with the curious, knobby craft that will forage between them, floating exuberantly through the light-years to the obsessive, formal, and startlingly appropriate tune of the 'Blue Danube' waltz. His interiors are equally breathtaking, from the sheer white of the space-station dotted with its stark red furniture to the huge circular room where the Jupiter-bound astronauts indulge in calisthenics that literally include the ceiling, or watch themselves being interviewed on flat television screens set into the lunch table beside their dishes of synthetic food-pastes. Best of all, there is a sense of fun that never obtrudes—the helmeted stewardesses who calmly turn upside down, the zero-gravity toilet with its immense list of essential instructions, the astronaut who is more concerned about his salary increase than about the significance of his voyage, and that splendid invention, Hal-9000, the talking computer who admits, with a complacent flicker of equations, that it enjoys working with people.

It could all too easily have been invalidated by some conventional narrative, a touch of spacesuit melodrama, a tidy ending. The strength of *Space Odyssey* is that it pinches the best from Arthur Clarke's original short story 'The Sentinel' and makes no ill-considered attempt to overload it—despite touches of padding in the not quite wholly successful first sequence (the apemen are acceptable enough until one sees their chimpanzee offspring) and in the amusing but ultimately slight second.

One realises afterwards that one has been almost hypnotised by the visual magnificence of the film, gliding on a roller-coaster of colours until the unclassifiable

landscapes of the Jupiter surface and the total dislocation of our arrival in the exquisitely furnished rooms haunted by a dying Keir Dullea fling us, as Kubrick has cannily intended, headlong into what feels like a new dimension altogether.

Only afterwards, as the magic recedes, comes the suspicion that all the artifice has simply been used to disguise what was an artificial premise to begin with. Like that curious cut from a bone falling in slow motion to a spaceship hovering among the stars, the eyes are tempted to accept without question what the mind would be equally tempted to refuse. Kubrick's greatest achievement has been to persuade us to believe him.

PHILIP STRICK

PETULIA

RICHARD LESTER's *Petulia* (Warner-Pathé) is one of those movies which begins as a succession of glittering, confusing fragments and only gradually develops a narrative line. Or rather, the narrative line is there from the beginning but there is a deliberate effort to prevent you from spotting it too easily; you are admitted to it only by degrees. The danger of the device is that interest is likely to decline as the mystification is dispersed, and this could easily have happened to *Petulia*; fortunately, it does not.

The story, it turns out in this case, is simple to the point of triteness. Archie, a San Francisco doctor (George C. Scott), has a brief affair with a wild and surprising girl called Petulia. He is divorced; she is married. She is beaten up and practically killed by her husband. Archie is in love with her, but he loses her; she goes back to her husband. Time passes, and he sees her from time to time in the distance. A year after their first meeting, she is about to have a baby; he speaks to her, and then they part for ever.

It is the sort of old-fashioned story which needs old-fashioned feeling to make it work. And, surprisingly, this is what it gets. None of Lester's films so far has had much heart, but *Petulia* has. There is

altogether a different voice to be heard in it, far from the excited noises of *The Knack*, the Beatles' films, or *How I Won the War*. There is a new and unexpected seriousness of tone, and the film moves on a more resonant imaginative level. It is strikingly beautiful visually, but visual beauty alone won't hold an audience's attention beyond the point when the narrative line becomes clear. *Petulia* succeeds because it makes the audience care.

The Knack fantasised reality; it was a commentary on a situation, not the situation itself. Lester's problem has always been how to approach the human substance without blushing too much. It's a bit embarrassing, telling a story; and it's not less embarrassing to have to tell a straight love story between a phlegmatic doctor and a kooky Julie Christie. The method he adopts somehow has to carry him through this embarrassment. Hence the obscurity of *Petulia's* beginning, with its near-subliminal shots, time sequence out of order, and counterpointed sound.

Hence also the formal patterns and parallel situations in the story. *Petulia's* husband David (Richard Chamberlain) is given to fits of extreme sadistic violence; so is his father (Joseph Cotten). The violence is somehow connected with having a lot of money; and if money is an infection and violence a symptom, *Petulia* has the disease too, for she is also impulsive and violent; and she passes on her violence to Archie, who uncharacteristically flares up in a scene with his divorced wife Polo (radiantly played by Shirley Knight).

Power and marriage are connected. Archie is outside it, a useless visitor of his children on Sundays, a powerless outsider when it comes to rescuing *Petulia* from her appalling family, and at the end a mere spectator beside her triumphant pregnancy. Archie is a doctor, and it is *Petulia* who first makes a pass—more than a pass, an assault—at him; but *Petulia* has first seen him, through the window of an operating theatre, working on the broken leg of Oliver, the small Mexican boy she has been looking after. Later she collapses in his room after her husband has cracked one of her ribs, and later still when she is beaten nearly to the point of death, it is only Archie's expertness as a doctor which saves her life. In other words, she seeks out a lover who will also be a healer. Oliver's leg is broken when he is run over in the street, and the story opens at an accident-prevention function ('Shake for Highway Safety'). All these links seem to me to add a pleasing complexity, but not density, to the film; they are part of the surface.

George C. Scott plays Archie in a similarly indirect way. He visits his children, takes them to Alcatraz (a pity about this, as *Point Blank* has already made use of this location) or to the zoo, but his attention is elsewhere. With Polo and her new man, he is trapped, embarrassed, anxious to get away. His friends make a ham-fisted attempt to get him to go back to Polo but it is as if they are talking another language. He retreats into his work, becoming more and more isolated. From time to time he catches glimpses of *Petulia*, but she is not the same person. In a totally self-denying way, this seems to me to be almost a great performance, except that the word 'great' does violence to its poise and feeling and reserve. Julie Christie seems to me very well cast in relation to Scott: he is not a handsome man or an obvious sexual warrior, and the results of the irruption into his life of someone with her looks and

directness of approach are predictable but accurately and movingly observed.

Shot in nine weeks largely in San Francisco, with dazzling colour photography by Nicholas Roeg, for British audiences it will be rather like watching Mackendrick's *Sweet Smell of Success*. Something American in these American-born directors reasserts itself, not merely in the setting; there is a sudden adjustment of scale to a larger and more serious society. In Mackendrick's case, something subsequently went wrong. But for Lester, after this brilliantly executed and deeply felt film, one can only have the highest hopes. And—I almost forgot to say—it is often very funny. I liked especially the visit to the automated motel, conceived on skin-flick lines, with radar-controlled king-size key and electric bed; and the scene with the woman in the hospital being told that the television set in her room is only a dummy to encourage her to hire a real one. The screenplay, by Lawrence Marcus, derives from a novel by John Haase.

JAMES PRICE

NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY and THE PRESIDENT'S ANALYST

IN MOVIE OR OUT, Hollywood films tend to have a new look about them these days, sometimes good, sometimes less so. *No Way to Treat a Lady* (Paramount), for instance, goes its own way nice and easy until shortly before the end, when it runs unnecessarily berserk with flash inserts and Marienbad poses as the murderer meets his doom (and his conscience) on the deserted stage of a theatre. This is no way to treat a nice, straightforward movie, which up till then has been Jack Smight's best to date: a witty, ghoulishly funny tale about a multiple strangler with a mother fixation and a taste for lurid impersonation, which offers Rod Steiger a real field day masquerading as—

among other things—a plumber from Frankfurt, an epicene wig-fitter, a bluff cop and a tremulous prostitute.

It begins just right with a crane shot which picks up a red-haired priest as he strides jauntily along the street, dispensing Irish top-o'-the-mornings and turning to leer at pretty girls before insinuating himself into the home of victim no. 1, whom he promptly dispatches and deposits on the lavatory seat after scrawling a lipsticked cupid's bow on the forehead. In a casually funny parody of the usual psychopathic killer pathology, Steiger then embarks on a breathless series of stranglings, telephones the police to keep them abreast of his activities, does a W. C. Fields impersonation to prove his *bona fides*, and selects officer Morris—known as Mo—Brummel (George Segal) as his personal confidant. "I just happened to mention that the murder was well planned. I guess he wanted to thank me," Brummel tries to explain to his chief.

The art department provides some splendid sets, including a Victorian monstrosity of floral wallpaper and antimacassars for victim no. 1, and a room festooned with cats for no. 3; Jack Priestley's colour camerawork is very easy on the eye, particularly in some New York location exteriors along the river and at Lincoln Center; and the casting achieves a master stroke by providing George Segal with Eileen Heckart as his nagging Jewish mom, whose ceaseless stream of derogatory remarks about her offspring, delivered with deadly indifference, makes the horrors of any sort of mother fixation all too tangible. Last but not least, John Gay's script (based on the novel by William Goldman) has an inventively zany logic worthy at times of Preston Sturges. Although rather slowed down by a series of clumsy love scenes between the detective and his girl (Lee Remick), *No Way to Treat a Lady* has something of the style of the screwball comedies of the Thirties: all the more pity that it gets out of its depth at the end.

The President's Analyst (Paramount), which also opens with a cunning crane shot

"NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY": ROD STEIGER.



and provides another field day part for its star, is an altogether more contemporary film, redolent of the wicked, subversive, off-Broadway satire from which its writer-director, Theodore Flicker, emerged. Interestingly, though, it never gets ideas above its stylistic station, and does all the better for leaving those all-purpose new wave models severely alone.

Its basic premise is almost a poetic summary of a psychiatry-fixated society—the air-conditioned nightmare of *homo americanus* as represented by Dr. Sidney Schaefer (James Coburn), a psychiatrist who delights in his new appointment as the President's analyst until, shouldering the cares of state and turned from a well-adjusted American into a haggard zombie (as only Coburn knows how), he realises an appalling truth. The President of the United States used to be the loneliest man in the world; now he has his analyst to talk to—but who can the *analyst* talk to?

Growing neurotic about his new-found hostility which makes him see a spy at every turn, afraid even to share his girl-friend's bed for fear of talking in his sleep, he decides to opt out and try to rediscover his well-adjusted self. It is with some relief ("I was right, I'm not paranoid. THEY'RE ALL SPYING!") that he realises that every secret agent in the world is out either to silence him or kidnap his store of secrets.

What follows is a crazy send-up to end all spy send-ups, often brilliantly funny, as the hunted analyst becomes a sort of American Alice in a wonderland where an all-american suburban couple come to his aid with karate and pistol skills learned in evening classes, while agents spend their time fraternising on street corners ("Please," says Soviet hailed by American, "no Russian while I'm working"). His trail ends with the uncovering of a gigantic plot by the Telephone Company, who, tired of public abuse, are out to improve their efficiency image by automating *everybody*. Joining forces with a miscellany of agents to foil the diabolical telephones, he finally finds readjustment through violence and lives happily ever after.

In his uneven and mostly misfiring first film, *The Troublemaker*, Flicker seemed uncertain how to get the best out of his own script. Here he makes no mistake. I particularly liked a laconic overhead shot of a field where James Coburn, disguised as a Beatle-wigged hippie, makes love to a girl from a flower-power group, happily unaware that the waving corn all around is dotted with dead agents who have committed mutual assassination while tracking him. Irresistibly quotable, too, is the patron of a psychedelic club who mutters, staring glassy-eyed at the drinks laced with LSD, "Blue ice-cubes . . . how degenerate!"

TOM MILNE

PLANET OF THE APES

IT IS NOT FOR NOTHING that the monkey cage is the most popular attraction at the zoo. Ever since we discovered that we share a common ancestor, the most intelligent of the animals has exerted an odd fascination which finds an outlet in the way we put pinafores on chimpanzees and train them to serve tea for television commercials. Is there method in our madness? Do we, in fact, humiliate monkeys because we are subconsciously rather alarmed by their capacity for human mimicry? Old ladies who talk to their cats scarcely expect an answer—but monkeys . . . ?

Planet of the Apes (Fox), adapted by Michael Wilson and Rod Serling from the novel by Pierre Boulle, carries this speculation to its logical conclusion by positing an upside-down world in which rational talking apes hold sway and man—mute and despised—is hunted down, exhibited in cages or preserved in a museum for the curious, even used as fodder for experimental surgery. Perilous territory, even for science fiction; but Franklin Schaffner deftly avoids most of the obvious pitfalls by tempering the script's rather lofty ideas with gently sardonic shafts of humour. On one level this is Swiftian satire at its

most grandiose, but it is not to be taken too seriously—or at least perhaps that is how we would prefer it.

If there are echoes of *The Best Man* in the play Schaffner makes on the paradox of the ape-human inversion, the first half of the film looks back to *The War Lord* in its splendidly detailed evocation of an alien society. Leaving Earth light years behind them in their search for something new and better, a party of astronauts find themselves stranded on a shimmering blue-green lake as dead and desolate as the weird landscape that dwarfs them as they trek forlornly across a wasteland of towering rocks and barren deserts. Gradually, though, signs of life announce themselves: a cluster of yellow flowers (which they seize on with childlike glee and then, characteristically, destroy); then a line of scarecrow pelts pegged out on the clifftops like warning totems; and beyond them an area of rich vegetation and a tribe of creatures who look like primitive men. "If this is the best they've got," says the leader (Charlton Heston), "in six months we'll be running this planet." The words are hardly out of his mouth when the astronauts are abruptly reduced to the level of these twittering creatures as the tall maize shivers with beaters' sticks and they are swept up in a manhunt. Rifles crack, huge nets swoop down on the terrified prey, and the hunters themselves finally emerge from the undergrowth—a posse of leather-jacketed gorillas. A pause for a group photograph and the apes are on their way back to town with their game.

The rest of the film is taken up with the humiliated astronaut's attempts to convince his captors that he is not some freak of nature, some deviate in the evolutionary line. Schaffner has a lot of fun (despite an occasional note of flippancy) with the ramifications of this paradox: the friendly chimpanzee who announces that 'the anti-vivisectionist society is up in arms' when the caged astronaut is threatened with gelding; the tribunal of elders with its echo of the Dayton monkey trial; the endearing touch at the end when the two chimpanzees condemned for heresy reach for each other's paws. But the really striking thing here is the way the details of this ape culture are sketched in. The monkey planet has a carefully evolved structure, not quite a class system but a kind of mediaeval hierarchy (matched by the domed architecture of their city), with austere orang-outangs as elder statesmen and defenders of the faith (no prizes for analogies in human history), a scientific fraternity of excitable chimpanzees, and at the bottom of the scale the proletarian gorillas, crude, unthinking and performing to order.

The measure of Schaffner's success in delineating this culture is that by the end, as Heston obstinately sets out to discover the awful truth of his human destiny, one is completely won over to the side of the apes; and one's final sympathies rest not with the astronaut (who has consistently looked on even the friendly chimpanzees as his inferiors) but with Dr. Zaius (Maurice Evans), who knows the truth and for that very reason refuses to reveal it. This ape society, for all its rigid orthodoxy, may just have something to teach us. And much of the credit for making this final message almost totally persuasive must go to the make-up department: underneath those flexible simian masks real characters evolve, so that after a time one almost begins to forget that they are monkeys. Which is where we came in.

DAVID WILSON

"IN THE TOWN OF 5": ANDREI POPOV AS CHEKHOV.



IN THE TOWN OF S

IONYCH, SAYS JOSIF HEIFITS, 'is the clearest, the most definite in its social implications, and I would say the most committed of Chekhov's stories. It represents a whole world, a whole epoch.' Rarely has a filmmaker been more faithful to his author than Heifits. Already, in *The Lady with a Little Dog*, he had shown his devotion to Chekhov. Now, with *In the Town of S* (New Cinema Club), he has indeed created a whole world—a living world, drawn in intricate detail and with infinite care. Although it is based on *Ionych* the film is less a version of the story than an imaginative account of how it came to be written, with Chekhov himself almost as much a central character as his doctor hero.

In the stunning opening shot Chekhov (played with quiet watchfulness by Andrei Popov) is stranded on a journey through snowy wastes. He shelters in a country inn where he meets an idealistic young doctor. Struck by the young man's naïveté, he finds himself wondering how he will have developed in twenty years. From there the film follows both Ionych Startsev as he sets up practice in the little town of S and Chekhov as he pursues his own career. Subtly and quietly, always by implication rather than statement, the state of Chekhov's health and fortunes affects his view of Startsev. In the middle section, while Chekhov is still struggling for recognition, Startsev is falling in love and being rejected by the silly, pretty daughter of a local bigwig. At the end when Chekhov, now a famous writer, knows himself to be dying, Startsev has become an ugly, bloated money-grubbing creature unrecognisable as the Ionych of the earlier years. The girl has changed, less plausibly, into a melancholy, sensitive woman.

The pace of the narrative, appropriately geared to the atmosphere of the period, is leisurely, but the editing is very much in the modern style, sharp, even staccato, with an occasional jerkiness which may be due in part to cuts in the English print. There is some evidence of loss in the Chekhov framework, particularly in the opening sequence where two characters (one played by Batalov) are established with some care only to disappear and never be seen again. But a minor imbalance between the central theme and its enclosing frame does not in the least affect the film's enchantment. Heifits' incredibly accurate sense of period and his eye for minute and memorable details draws one easily into 19th-century Russia, with that curious sense of having lived within a film which is rare and so rewarding.

There is the funeral procession, for instance, momentarily seen through a café window, the mourners strutting, prancing or staggering according to their personal oddities, all uneasy in their formal black. They are ridiculous in a way which is perfectly Chekhovian—the essence of a provincial community caught in a single shot. Ionych comes to know some of them more intimately, especially the Turkins and their daughter Katia, who pounds the piano at musical evenings while her mother reads unpublished (and unpublishable) novels and her father repeats his endless practical jokes. Outside their forlornly pretentious little circle, servants chase chickens, schoolboys riot through the streets, the furred boots of a policeman pace across the snow.



"PLANET OF THE APES".

Chekhov's own life, moving in quite a different social sphere, is just as carefully detailed but much more charming. It is perhaps best represented by a little scene at Nice. Chekhov leaves the promenade because a tiresome woman has recognised him, and stands among a group of children to watch a performing dog. But the dog, an independent creature, is sleepy and reluctant. It has to be chivvied and coaxed before it leaps through its hoop. Delightful, but completely irrelevant? Not really—it tells us a good deal about Chekhov. "What a likeable dog, that Toto," he remarks as he strolls away. A whole world, a whole epoch; complete, rounded characters. Literary adaptation as good as this is virtually a genre in itself and Heifits is its master.

BRENDA DAVIES

MAHANAGAR

SATYAJIT RAY MADE *Mahanagar* (Temporary), which means the big city, in Calcutta in 1963. It came to the London Film Festival in 1964, and we remembered it as lightweight Ray with an especially rich quota of humour. That is how it still seems, with the humour marvellously perceptive about the little things that are really the big things of life.

This conflict within the family between tradition and progress, between the old culture and the new enlightenment, that runs through all Ray's films, is after all a feature of the human condition not just in India but everywhere, and not just in our time but always. The need to overthrow things that conceivably still matter to us, and to taste the kind of knowledge that can sever us regretfully from our roots, recurs with each generation. What is so exciting about Ray's approach to this is that he actually shows us the ambivalence of people's attitudes. *Mahanagar* is about a young housewife (Madhabi Mukherjee)

who goes out to work for the first time, and we can see on her face the mixture of nostalgia and anticipation, fear and courage, that this occasions. When a film can get as far inside people as this, there is no possibility of its losing anything with the passage of time.

This is not to deny the importance of the precise placing in space and time. For Ray, I think, the limitations imposed by his Bengali family settings provide the disciplined framework which, in one form or another, every artist needs. The family in this film is headed by Subrata (Anil Chatterjee), a bank accountant with a B.A., who supports both his parents and his young sister as well as his wife and son. His father managed to bring up a large family on a schoolmaster's salary, but Subrata, with apparently fewer liabilities, is too poor to buy his father the pair of glasses that he badly needs. A solution, Subrata casually suggests, would be to send his wife Arati out to work. Arati has no modern ideas, but out of a sense of duty to her husband she volunteers to give up her place in the home. Then, gradually, with a kind of quiet inevitability, we see the whole of the old order go.

What job can Arati do with only her matriculation? Subrata finds a suitable one among the classified advertisements, gets a letter of application typed out for her to sign, agrees to take her to the interview and breaks the news to the parents when she gets the job. Anguished scenes ensue. "Do you know what Shaw said about girls going out to work?" Subrata asks his mother, who squats whimpering on the floor, refusing to speak to anyone. He and Arati eat breakfast side by side—a staggering departure from custom, the first meal taken together like this since their wedding day. On the way to work her hands are as cold as they were only once before. What is it that conveys to us, even at this stage, how very much, despite her fear of it, the unknown is worth having? Can it be simply the allusions to the wedding? With Ray, it is practically impossible to account for

such moments of near total identification in terms of technique, because he uses the art that conceals art.

Arati's job is selling knitting-machines from door to door, and although she runs away in terror when a man answers the first door bell she rings, she soon turns out to be extremely good at the work. But nobody at home approves, and the father is still not speaking because of it. Subrata finally decides that she must give it up, and then his bank crashes. Instead of resigning, she becomes the breadwinner, and now their marriage is noticeably suffering as a result of his wounded pride. We get the exact measure of what is going wrong in scenes like the one in which Arati unintentionally humiliates her husband by asking him to take some money out of her handbag, and he finds there the very daring lipstick that Arati's Anglo-Indian colleague had given her to wear at work. The ending of the film is manipulated in a manner not characteristic of Ray, as if it had been clapped on in haste, but to complain of this is to judge him by the standards that he has set himself. On a less ideal plane, it is a flaw that we might almost overlook.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

THE GRADUATE

THE STRUCTURE OF Mike Nichols' second feature inevitably reminds one of those brilliant gramophone records on which he and Elaine May, in a series of four or five minute dialogues, worked their way through a succession of characterisations and situations—two Feifferish characters, never so distorted as to be unrecognisable, each of them determined to have the last word.

But if the ability to assume several different personalities in as many minutes is a positive attribute in a revue artist, it can be a definite handicap to actors having to establish themselves as credible characters in a coherent narrative. And while *The Graduate* (United Artists) contains several dialogues which are both hilarious and painful, they remain essentially separate—stock situations that involve not distinct individuals but recognisable types: the middle-class father (William Daniels) trying to communicate with his

mixed-up son; the dissatisfied older woman (Anne Bancroft) trying to seduce the virgin graduate by alternating threats, cajolery and commands; the younger man trying to get closer to his detached mistress by starting a discussion about Art in the middle of the night; the young lover assuring the outraged husband that it's his daughter (Katharine Ross), not his wife, whom he's really interested in.

Each sequence is faultlessly played in itself, but the connections between them are more formal than plausible. The characters change without really developing. Anne Bancroft, who has some wonderful Jeanne Moreau-style moments, is required to pass from the role of knowing and sardonic seductress to a jealous Fury bent on forcing her daughter into an unhappy marriage. Dustin Hoffman, the passive and essentially conventional graduate, is supposedly galvanised by a kiss from a pretty co-ed into acts of revolt and even sacrilege. In a final sequence that owes a lot to *Morgan*, he whisks the bride away from the altar after she has pronounced her vows and wards off her relatives by using the cross as a club.

The Graduate's titles unfold against the musical background of Paul Simon's beautiful song "The Sounds of Silence" ("... people talking without speaking/ people hearing without listening...") and this theme, of a desire to communicate matched only by an inability to do so, does serve in part to unify the different episodes. Almost every empty conversation (and it's interesting that Nichols seldom attempts to confront more than two of his characters at the same time) is preluded by one of those painfully earnest pleas in the American vocative ("Ben, can I talk to you for a minute?"). Perhaps it's significant that when the hero finally runs off with the one person he claims he can talk to, they sit together side by side in silence.

Ironically though, it's the hint of serious themes—incest, alienation, the generation gap, the *déjà vu* critique of suburban society—that prevents one enjoying *The Graduate* as the first class entertainment comedy it basically is. The film somehow gets hoist with the petard of its own pretensions, and Nichols ends up like his characters, wanting to communicate something he can't quite get across.

JAN DAWSON

RONDO

SUNDAY AFTERNOON in the city. In the deserted square time stands still; in the café on the corner men sit motionless; staring into their coffee, and even the hands on the clock seem to have stopped in sympathy. The silence is broken by the blare of a football commentator's voice from some distant radio, but the voice fades and the dog-day heat continues to cloud the senses. It was Sunday afternoons in the city ("wet and cheerless... a duller spectacle this earth of ours has not to show") that first drove De Quincey to opium. In *Rondo* (Academy/Connoisseur) the anodyne is chess. Glancing at his watch, a man leaves the café and crosses the square to call on a friend he has met casually while watching pensioners play chess in a park. They have decided to prove to themselves that Sunday afternoons can be spent intelligently.

As its title suggests, Zvonimir Berković's film follows the musical structure of a rondo, a recurring theme counterpointed by episodic variations. The main theme is the weekly game of chess—in itself of course a set of infinite variations on a standard theme. At first the players on each side of the board look like a study in contrasts: Mladen, the visitor, a divorcee court judge, a lonely, punctilious bachelor; his friend Fedja an artist, unruffled and extrovert. But as one Sunday follows another, the masks are stripped. Fedja is revealed as a bohemian turned bourgeois, a compromised artist, his beard as much a prop as the bric-à-brac that fills his flat; and while he concentrates on the chessboard another and more serious game is being enacted, for Mladen, casually and almost imperceptibly, is making ploys for his friend's wife Neda. To Fedja one Sunday is like another, but to Mladen and Neda each visit represents a new move in the game.

Berković modulates these sea-changes with an appropriately Mozartian grace (though his film is much more than an exercise in style). The conversations are as formal and regulated as the moves on the chessboard or the repetitions of the record on the gramophone. Outwardly each Sunday looks the same: the ring on the doorbell, chess, coffee, dinner, the staircase farewell and the invitation to come again next week. But the rules of the game between Mladen and Neda are unplotted, improvised from the nuances of a glance or a sentence spoken when one of the players is off guard. One Sunday, for instance, Mladen and Fedja accidentally change places at the table, and from his new position Mladen becomes master at the chessboard while Neda, aware of her husband's weakness, urges him to make a series of attacking moves—all of them fruitless as Mladen takes control of the centre squares. And on the wall behind a poster of Picasso smiles down on them, as inscrutable as a Delphic oracle.

Inevitably the game, and its repercussions, is brought out into the open. But just as inevitably the weekly visits, the idle conversations, go on as before—with the difference that by the end the chess is no longer a diversion but simply one more conditioned reflex to the tedium of Sunday. As Neda says, once a move has been made it cannot be withdrawn: life goes on as it did, but in the course of the game each of the players has been changed.

DAVID WILSON

"RONDO".



BOOK REVIEWS

SHAKESPEARE, TIME AND CONSCIENCE, by Grigori Kozintsev.
(Dobson, 45s.)

READING KOZINTSEV'S BOOK on Shakespeare makes me want to see his *Hamlet* film again. I do so, and realise that the persistent images and gestures of the film which etched themselves into me at first viewing have an even more profound hold second time round.

"How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world"—Hamlet strides among the multilingual courtiers and ambassadors of Elsinore, whose creation in all its power and actuality is one of Kozintsev's enormous achievements. K's production notes: "The camera goes closer; we hear the words of his thoughts, but the spy who shadows him hears nothing. He has nothing to write down in his report: steps, quiet. Hamlet . . . thinks. There is nothing more dangerous."

The stabled horses breaking their harness to gallop away in terror at the approach of the ghost: K's understanding of the out-of-jointness of the kingdom, a perfect cinematic expression of Shakespeare's cosmology, where disorder expresses itself in the panic of horses, the turbulence of the sea, as much as in the acts of men.

The players tearing a passion to tatters—in a palace courtyard among stablemen and poultry. Hamlet's whoop of energy as he receives the transfusion of purpose from the player's fiction—an outburst perfectly judged, an index of the deep sympathy between performer and director.

K's acute sense of what makes a film image, an event, an action that reverberates beyond what it literally is, just as the play's actions, properly incarnated on stage, should do. Ophelia's madness, so often performed on stage as a shameful episode in a closet room inhabited only by top people: in the film she goes mad in the middle of the entire court, astonished soldiers and serving-men her witnesses. Film imagery that is the transcription, not, the metamorphosis and re-creation of the Shakespearean pulse.

In one of his diary entries K tells of two travel guides. One, taking visitors round Holyrood Castle, performed a hammy evocation of the life and loves of Mary Stuart. The other gave a quiet, realistic description of everything in his museum. His museum was the Auschwitz museum. "The Holyrood guide sweated and climbed out of his skin to make the affairs of distant history seem effective and dramatic. He tried, in hope of tips. A number was burned into the arm of the man at Auschwitz. By chance, he survived. To tell how it all really was became the meaning of his life. That the story be remembered in its full scale and with accuracy of detail. That it might seem to every man that a number had been burned into his own arm. Those who see our movie must feel that it is they who had befriended Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, that Claudius owned them body and soul, that Polonius taught them morals. And that now, with Hamlet, they smash the very foundations of Elsinore."

Here, in an unforgettable image, K crystallises the strength of his film, and throughout the production notes on *Hamlet* which form the crux of his book, we see the roots of this strength. (The book also contains essays on *Lear*, *Henry IV*, and a trip to Stratford-upon-Avon, but these are in a more academic style, quite different from the incisive urgency of the production diary.) By twists and turns, he seeks sources to burn this image of *Hamlet* into the minds of the audience. Sometimes he sees Hamlet as the young Mayakovsky, sowing insolent chaos in a pre-Revolution *salon*; or he plucks a phrase from Pushkin ("Hamlet tells jokes that make your hair stand on end"), and, through letters and daily work with Smokhtunovskii, translates this insight into the hair-raising coolness with which the actor throws those daggers of deadly wit at the sham world around him.

And above all, he seeks sources in his own contemporary experience of the last forty years in Soviet Russia, to find touchstones for the 'prison' which Denmark has become. The experience of a man who has lived through Stalinism, through the wearying



OPHELIA IN KOZINTSEV'S "HAMLET".

watchfulness required of every citizen of a police state, suffuses the entire film, and is present in every line K writes. "They often stage *Hamlet* in modern dress, but tell a tale of ancient life. The tragedy must be played in sixteenth-century costume but must be dealt with as a modern story."

It is the experience of a police state that gives K the imagery of spies and sentries and frontier controls (Fortinbras never made so much sense), of eavesdropping and timeserving 'smiling villains' (whether Osric or Claudius) who populate Elsinore. It is the experience of coping with a police state that makes him place Ophelia's madness in a family and social system of repression, and slowly, patiently, and with infinite care, carve out with Smokhtunovskii a line of conduct which, in all its sobriety and control, picks a path through a world full of snares to achieve a final peace that is at one with the elements beyond history—birds, the sea, stone, fire, all images that permeate the film. (And incidentally, the difference in tone between Kozintsev and Jan Kott, whose *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* grows from similar historical and political experience, is marked: Kott, jagged and aggressive, wrote his book as a spectator and reader; Kozintsev, through his collaborative work with actors he loves and admires, and through the collective experience of forging a film, expresses the same pent-up sensitivity, but transcends it towards a sense of stability and continuity. Kott is 'black'; Kozintsev, 'humanist'.)

This is why he clings to Shakespeare's seminal scenes, and (as he puts it) 'beats his brains out' to bring them to film fruition. This is why he makes a living truth of Shakespeare's words 'man is not a pipe', why he understands that, under such pressure, Hamlet's words must be 'like daggers', why the most fantastic and fiercely visionary passages of the play have a strict realistic meaning for him, and why, at the end of his diary, he writes: "There is an infinity between listening and hearing. Many times, I have listened to a whole Shakespearean text in the theatre, and often did not hear what was basic. The picture of life, the relation of man and state, the impossibility of existence in a world without souls—all this, I am sure, can be expressed on the screen more completely than is possible on the stage. Yes, more completely, and with fewer words."

There is very little in this book about the mechanics of filming. And yet it is filled through and through with the importance of making a film, with the responsibility of *making real* through the process of directing a film. Burning a number into people's arms. Or minds. Or (he does not fear the words), conscience, soul.

Hamlet, dying, turns to Horatio: "Absent thee from felicity awhile, And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain to tell my story." Kozintsev has drawn his breath and told the story.

MICHAEL KUSTOW

BOOKS RECEIVED

BROADCASTING AND PUBLIC POLICY. By E. G. Wedell. (Michael Joseph, 50s.)

HISTOIRE DU CINEMA, Vol. 1, 1895-1914. By Jean Mitry. (Editions Universitaires, Paris, 43 Fr.)

SIGHT, SOUND AND SOCIETY. Edited by David Manning White and Richard Averson. (Beacon Press, Boston, \$7.50)

SOMETHING SOFT. By Roland Starke. (Faber and Faber, 25s.)

THE UNDERGROUND FILM. By Sheldon Renan. (Studio Vista, 35s.)



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CORRESPONDENCE

Incitement Against Violence

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—I read with great interest Philip French's article 'Incitement Against Violence' in your Winter 1967/68 issue. In it, Mr. French made reference to three works on which I have writing credits—the films *Al Capone* (1959) and *Undercover Man* (1949), and the CBS television show, *Albert Anastasia: His Life and Death* (1957).

Mr. French might be interested in a few footnotes to his fascinating article. The film *Undercover Man*, although directed by Joseph Lewis, was produced by director Robert Rossen, who directed such famous American films as *Body and Soul*, *All the King's Men* and *The Hustler*. Incidentally, during the making of *Undercover Man*, we were forbidden by the American censors to mention Al Capone by name, and were forced to refer to him obliquely as 'The Big Fellow'. At first the censor refused to let us state that Capone owed the government over a million dollars in income taxes, but Harry Cohn, head of Columbia Studios, refused to give in—and we were allowed to mention the amount of money.

The first draft of *Al Capone* was turned down by the Hollywood censors. The script had to be rewritten with the story told from the viewpoint of an honest police officer who witnessed the rise of the Al Capone organisation, but was ineffective in fighting it because of political corruption and public apathy. Incidentally, I have just written a screenplay called *Jake*, based on the career of Jake Lingle, a Chicago reporter who served as a link between Capone and the city officials.

Hollywood

Yours faithfully,
MALVIN WALD

SIR,—I thought Philip French's coverage of various trends in the gangster film interestingly done and should like to add a few comments: Fritz Lang's *You Only Live Once* in its latter portions seems at least partially based on the career of Bonnie and Clyde, even to their deaths at the hands of the police while trying to escape an ambush. A later film, Joseph Lewis' *Gun Crazy* (1950) with Peggy Cummins and John Dall, also seems to have been inspired by their career and depicts a carnival girl trick-shooter who induces her husband to join her in a series of robberies and killings until they are both finally tracked down by the law.

One interesting film generally overlooked in most surveys of the crime film is Roland West's *Corsair* (1931), in which the methods of Wall Street business are equated with those of gangsterdom—a theme similar to that developed later by Chaplin in *Monsieur Verdoux*. Chester Morris plays a failed junior financier who applies business methods to crime and becomes successful at bootlegging and piracy—to the extent that he marries the boss's daughter who had previously spurned him. The film reminds one of a cheerily corrupt Horatio Alger story and West's direction is assured throughout, particularly in a tense murder scene and a climactic confrontation between the rival gangs on the high seas.

Fairview, New Jersey.

Yours faithfully,
WILLIAM THOMAS

Alain Robbe-Grillet

SIR,—I would like to take issue with John Ward on several points made in his article 'Alain Robbe-Grillet, the novelist as director' in SIGHT AND SOUND of Spring 1968. The fact that stands out is that Mr. Ward has not bridged the gap between experience and behaviour even as well as has Robbe-Grillet. While appreciating the basis of Robbe-Grillet's use of objective correlatives, that mode and selectivity of perception are reflections of one's feelings and thoughts, he seems still to find them insufficient, implying a need for the techniques with which Robbe-Grillet has so successfully dispensed.

It is necessary, indeed essential, that linear time should be dislocated if a realistic synthesis of behaviour and experience is to be presented; and it is unrealistic to dispense with behaviour merely because (as in the example quoted) one happens to know what climbing a flight of stairs involves.

Despite his comprehension of the style, Mr. Ward still expects to be told a story. He cites examples which are 'irritating' (repeated shots of a face, vagueness and confused obsessions of the central character in *L'Immortelle*); he appeals for 'context', 'inevitability', 'a rhythmic whole'. But this is life as she is lived! Sartre shows

clearly in *La Nausée* how disconnected events such as these only become adventure when deliberately repeated in the form of a story; this is what Mr. Ward seems to expect, and what Robbe-Grillet rejects. In fact his heightened realism 'panders to the public' far more than does the usual behavioural film, which on the contrary is virtually an insult to the intelligence.

The style of Godard will be of little help to Robbe-Grillet; Godard's use of Brechtian technique is not so that nothing intrudes between film and audience. Quite the contrary: both the intention behind and his use of these effects is to alienate the audience, to make them conscious of the fact that they are sitting in a cinema watching a film. It is the non-intrusion between film and audience that Robbe-Grillet aims for, and this will only be achieved when the audience is posited, not as an observer, but as an actual character in the film.

It is not that Robbe-Grillet makes 'no concessions to the uniqueness of the medium'. He is perhaps the first to really exploit it.

Yours faithfully,

Liverpool University
Film Society.

ALEX SCOTT-SAMUEL

SIR,—In his article on Alain Robbe-Grillet John Ward was mistaken, or at least misleading, on two very different and important points.

First—he states that the 'puzzle' in Robbe-Grillet's novels may be solved by the reader re-creating for himself linear time. In his essay 'Time and Description in Contemporary Narrative', referring to *Jealousy*, Robbe-Grillet says: "It was absurd to think that there was a clear and univocal order of events that existed outside that of the book, as if I had amused myself by mixing up a pre-established order." But if Mr. Ward takes this to be one of the author's jokes, why doesn't he amuse himself by cutting up his copy of *Jealousy* and pasting it together in the pre-established order?

Second—he assumes that in *L'Immortelle* and his novels Robbe-Grillet 'relies on objective correlatives to develop the character's emotional life.' He doesn't. The objects, as Robbe-Grillet has often pointed out, are there—that is all—and they don't correspond to various states of emotion.

Yours faithfully,

London, W.14.

JONATHAN MEADES

THE AUTUMN OF JEAN RENOIR

continued from page 141

suggests an abdication of responsibility, almost a failure of nerve, throughout the film—which is not cancelled out by the peripeteia at the very end, when he decides that he will still stand for the Presidency. We are not invited to ask whether he will be elected, still less how Nénette will make out as a busy international hostess in the highest political circles.

Nénette therefore recurs like a temptation or at most a liberation out of rigid conventions rather than into new meaningful possibilities, beyond a narrowly sexual level. The actress's accidental physical resemblance to the crude, early image of Jane Russell only emphasises the film's peculiar lack of self-consistency and of seriousness—the seriousness appropriate to comedy.

To end on this carping note would contradict the main purpose of this essay. Nor have I intended, by approaching the weaknesses of *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* mainly in terms of structural analysis, to imply that all would have been well if Renoir had added another female character for Etienne to reject, so making up the 'correct' triple pattern. Besides, though the film seems to me less successful as a whole than the others already discussed, there are many compensating beauties in its parts. And the central humane intention, the warmth and health of feeling, are not in doubt, despite the fuzziness of thought and some thinness of realisation. It appears a partial failure only by comparison with Renoir's own standards; even so, it still bears the unmistakable imprint of a major creative artist.

To sum up, the new elements in Renoir's post-American films are (a) visual richness, as distinct from the earlier alert visual responsiveness (b) moral schemas, as distinct from the former multiple relationships establishing a social world. These could be interpreted as decline or a new richness. I have tried to show them as development, as autumnal works rounding off the *oeuvre* of a great master who is central to the French and indeed the European tradition.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *The President's Analyst*, *The Outsider*, *No Way to Treat a Lady*.
PARAMOUNT/MEMORIAL ENTERPRISES for *If...*
UNITED ARTISTS for *The Graduate*, *A Fistful of Dollars*.
20th CENTURY-FOX for *Pretty Poison*, *The Guru*, *Planet of the Apes*.
WARNER-PATHE for *Finian's Rainbow*.
COLUMBIA PICTURES for *In Cold Blood*.
M-G-M for *2001: A Space Odyssey*.
BRITISH LION for *Hamlet*.
MIRACLE FILMS for *French Cancan*.
CONTEMPORARY/CONNOISSEUR for *Mouchette*.
ACADEMY/CONNOISSEUR for *Rondo*.
UNIFRANCE FILM/CONNOISSEUR for *Weekend*.
UNIFRANCE FILM/FILMEL-C.I.C.C. (Paris)/FIDA CINEMATOGRAFICA (Rome) for *Le Samourai*.
UNIVERSAL PICTURES for *Secret Ceremony*.
HAWORTH PRODUCTIONS/ANGLO-EMBASSY for *The Lion in Winter*.
CINERIZ for *Grazie Zia*.
SANDREWS for *Hugo and Josef*.
CESKOSLOVENSKY FILM for *Report on the Party and the Guests*.
CESKOSLOVENSKY FILM/BARRANDER/CARLO PONTI for *Like a House on Fire*.
ARCO FILMS for *Edipo Re*.
IDI CINEMATOGRAFICA (Rome)/FRANZ SEITZ FILM for *Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*.
CAHIERS DU CINEMA for *Hands Up*.
NEW CINEMA CLUB for *In the Town of S.*
MARIE SETON for *Gopi Gyne Bagha Byne*.
MORTEN BO/DELTA for photograph of Skolimowski.
RUI NOGUEIRA/NICOLETTA ZALAFFI for photographs of Jean-Pierre Melville.

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SOLE AGENTS for U.S.A.: Eastern News Distributors, 155 West 15th Street, New York 10011.
PRINTED BY Brown Knight & Truscott Ltd., London, England.
BLOCKS by Art Reproduction Co. Ltd, London.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES (4 issues) 22s. including postage.
U.S.A.: \$4. Price per copy in United States, \$1.
PUBLICATION DATES: 1st January, 1st April, 1st July, and 1st October.
Overseas Editions: 12th of these months.

It was a great joy to see written down in such simple terms a method which should be of the greatest assistance to actors. I had the great fortune to hear the words as spoken by the master himself and have forever benefited from them.

says **MOIRA LISTER**

Acting without life is as dull on the screen as it is in the theatre. Bertie Scott was the most exciting teacher, and his book brings back his probing energy and integrity so vividly.

says **STELLA RICHMAN**

Jill Furze, my first wife, was very fond of Bertie Scott, and owed a great deal to his brilliant teaching and warm encouragement.

says **LAURENCE WHISTLER**

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by Bertie Scott

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FILM GUIDE

Films of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two, three or four stars.

***CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE, THE** (United Artists) Tony Richardson's most assured film for some time, and a solid try at meeting the question of how Cardigan, Raglan and Lucan blundered away the Light Brigade. But hard lines blur in a bedazzlement of pretty camera-work, and it's a film for the pernickety gesture rather than the great moment. (Trevor Howard, John Gielgud, David Hemmings, Vanessa Redgrave. DeLuxe Color, Panavision.)

CLAMBAKE (United Artists) Routine Elvis Presley vehicle, with our hero disporting himself harmlessly amid the water-skiers and motor-boats at Miami Beach. (Shelley Fabares, Will Hutchins, James Gregory; director, Arthur H. Nadel. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

*****CLOSELY OBSERVED TRAINS** (Curzon) First feature by Jiri Menzel, set in a lackadaisical country station in wartime Czechoslovakia. Intensely sympathetic, unexpected and comic, and as closely controlled as its own trains. Reviewed last year from Cannes (Summer 1967) under its then title of *Special Priority Trains*. (Václav Neckár, Vladimír Valenta, Josef Somr.)

COUNTERPOINT (Rank) Loose and cliché-ridden adaptation of Alan Sillitoe's *The General* which systematically reduces all of its characters' subtler problems to empty aphorisms. Redeemed by a splendidly flamboyant performance from Charlton Heston as the egotistical conductor. (Maximilian Schell, Kathryn Hays; director, Ralph Nelson. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

DEVIL RIDES OUT, THE (Warner-Pathé) Uneventful version of Dennis Wheatley's black magic thriller. Satanic manifestations disappointingly innocuous, direction wooden, dialogue unintentionally risible. (Christopher Lee, Charles Gray, Nike Arrighi; director, Terence Fisher. Technicolor.)

DON'T LOOK NOW . . . WE'RE BEING SHOT AT! (Rank) Self-consciously Gallic comedy with Louis de Funès and Bourvil working their way across occupied France in an assortment of disguises and protracted sight gags. Attractive photography by Claude Renoir occasionally camouflages a script stuffed with stereotypes. (Terry-Thomas; director, Gérard Oury. Eastman Colour, Panavision.)

EIGHT ON THE RUN (United Artists) Bob Hope paired with seven children, an outside dog and the tiresomely energetic Phyllis Diller in a weary comedy about a bank teller on the run as a suspected embezzler. Unfunny. (Jonathan Winters, Shirley Eaton; director, George Marshall. DeLuxe Color.)

*****ELVIRA MADIGAN** (Academy/Connoisseur) An exquisite essay in pure romanticism: the story of the dreamy, doomed love affair between a tightrope dancer and a young army officer in sunny, pastoral, turn-of-the-century Denmark. (Pia Degermark, Thommy Berggren; director, Bo Widerberg. Eastman Colour.)

FITZWILLY STRIKES BACK (United Artists) Inoffensive if unlikely comedy concerning the attempts of an ingenious butler to keep his impoverished lady employer in her accustomed style by organising a servants' crime syndicate. Edith Evans has some enjoyable moments as the eccentric dowager, but most of the humour gets swallowed up in the sentimentality of Delbert Mann's direction. (Dick Van Dyke, Barbara Feldon. DeLuxe Color, Panavision.)

FOX, THE (Warner-Pathé) Solemn and somewhat plodding adaptation of the D. H. Lawrence story about two lonely women and the handsome stranger who turns up at their remote farm. Quite well acted, but the delicate symbolism of the original is hamfistedly overplayed. (Keir Dullea, Sandy Dennis, Anne Heywood; director, Mark Rydell. DeLuxe Color.)

****GRADUATE, THE** (United Artists) A hilarious script and a fair amount of gimmickry vie with the more serious pretensions of Mike Nichols' second feature to produce a film less than the sum of its parts. Enjoyable though, with a virtuoso performance from Anne Bancroft. (Dustin Hoffman, Katharine Ross. Technicolor, Panavision.) Reviewed.

GUNS FOR SAN SEBASTIAN (M-G-M) The *Seven Samurai* for solo hero, with Anthony Quinn as a rough and tumbling variation on Greene's whisky priest, bringing tidings of comfort and joy to oppressed Mexican peasants who mistake him for a man of God. Efficient but uninteresting. (Anjanette Comer, Charles Bronson; director, Henri Verneuil. Metrocolor, Franscope.)

***HAPPIEST MILLIONAIRE, THE** (Disney) Cheerful Disney musical with Tommy Steele as Irish butler to an eccentric Philadelphia millionaire, his family and his alligators. An innocuous mixture of slapstick, sentiment and simple songs. (Fred MacMurray, Greer Garson; director, Norman Tokar. Technicolor.)

***HEROSTRATUS** (B.F.I.) Don Levy's flashily ambitious first feature about a young suicide's bid to win fame by donating his death to an advertising agency. A few poignant moments and some beautiful photography by Keith Allams emerge from the general vertigo. (Michael Gothard. Eastman Colour.)

HOW TO SAVE A MARRIAGE . . . AND RUIN YOUR LIFE (Columbia) Dean Martin as New York philanderer who gets hooked by the girl from whose imagined wiles he is trying to save best friend Eli Wallach. The usual topping pyramids of misunderstandings; four or five laughs. (Stella Stevens, Anne Jackson; director, Fielder Cook. Technicolor, Panavision.)

LUV (Columbia) Desperately modish, wildly failing comedy, from Murray Schisgal's play about New Yorkers in and out of love—mainly by their own images. Jack Lemmon and Elaine May go down battling hard with characterisations pickled in whimsy. (Peter Falk; director, Clive Donner. Technicolor, Panavision.)

MÄDCHEN, MÄDCHEN (Amanda) A triangle affair with a teenage girl switching her attentions from father to son. Serious—nay, Germanically solemn—in treatment, and insufferably dull. (Helga Anders, Jürgen Jung; director, Roger Fritz.)

*****MAHANAGAR** (Contemporary) Deliciously and touchingly funny Satyajit Ray film about an Indian modern woman and her tribulations as wife and knitting-machine saleswoman. Marred only by the slightly melodramatic dénouement. (Madhabi Mukherjee, Anil Chatterjee.) Reviewed.

MAN OUTSIDE, THE (London Independent Producers) Tepid spy-from-the-cold story about the abortive attempts of a disenchanted ex-agent to stay retired from the CIA, not helped by an undistinguished script and unimaginative photography. (Van Heflin; director, Samuel Gallu. Technicolor, Techniscope.)

*****MOUCHETTE** (Contemporary) Bresson's superb adaptation of the Bernanos novel about a peasant girl driven to suicide by the indifference around her. Radiant, self-absorbed, dispassionately compassionate; in other words, a Bresson film. (Nadine Nortier.) Reviewed.

****NO WAY TO TREAT A LADY** (Paramount) Bitingly funny black comedy, slightly spoilt by a melodramatic finale, with Rod Steiger as a Manhattan strangler in a multiplicity of disguises. Steiger's film, but excellent support from harassed detective George Segal and Eileen Heckart as an archetypal Yiddisher Momma. (Lee Remick; director, Jack Smight. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

****ODD COUPLE, THE** (Paramount) Neat adaptation of Neil Simon's play about two divorced husbands who set up house together and discover what made them impossible to live with. Walter Matthau brilliant, Jack Lemmon good, direction only so-so. (Carole Shelley, Monica Evans; director, Gene Saks. Technicolor, Panavision.)

ONLY WHEN I LARF (Paramount) Con-men Richard Attenborough and David Hemmings, with the help of their girl-friend Alexandra Stewart, try to swindle an emergent African nation with promises of a supply of arms, in a routine comedy that is unlikely to foster international understanding. (Director, Basil Dearden. Eastman Colour.)

****PETULIA** (Warner-Pathé) Divorced doctor at San Francisco hospital struggles through encounters with first wife, children, and fey, unhappy, assertive Petulia. Wildly fragmented. At its best painful, funny, and edgy as a razor-blade; at its worst bits and pieces dressed in Carnaby Street cinema. (George C. Scott, Julie Christie, Shirley Knight, Richard Chamberlain; director, Richard Lester. Technicolor.) Reviewed.

****PLANET OF THE APES** (Fox) Astronaut Charlton Heston stranded light years ahead, on a planet where men are freaks and apes are men. Superior SF all the way, and a clever amalgam by Franklin Schaffner of lucid comedy (*The Best Man*) and haunting meetings with the unknown (*The War Lord*). (Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter. DeLuxe Color, Panavision.) Reviewed.

****PRESIDENT'S ANALYST, THE** (Paramount) Way out satire on the spreading American status symbol of anxiety, bursting with malice against FBI, CIA, sex, suburbia, the Telephone Company and other totems. Uneven, but often brilliant. (James Coburn, Godfrey Cambridge, Joan Delaney; director, Theodore J. Flicker. Technicolor, Panavision.) Reviewed.

*****RONDO** (Academy/Connoisseur) Beautifully modulated set of variations on the *ménage à trois* theme about a young couple and their lonely friend who visits them for Sunday tea and chess. Masterly evocation of all the sadness of Sundays in the city. (Stevio Zigon, Milena Dravic, Relja Basic; director, Zvonimir Berkovic.) Reviewed.

****SEBASTIAN** (Paramount) Dirk Bogarde as Britain's champion cryptographer, commanding a staff of debbish code clerks. A quirkish, indeterminate, lively lightweight (most of its plot lines turn out to be tangents) with a feeling for the way people talk. Worth tracking down. (Susannah York, Lilli Palmer, John Gielgud; director, David Greene. Eastman Colour.)

SEX FROM A STRANGER (New Realm) Torpid psychological thriller involving a nubile infanticide who ensnares a bemused literary critic at his weekend retreat. Ludicrously pretentious overtones. (Marie-France Boyer, Pierre Vanneck; director, Sergio Gobbi. Eastman Colour.)

******2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** (M-G-M) Kubrick's view of man in space, and one of the few giant movies that one wouldn't want an inch smaller. Marvellously ingenious, tantalising and intelligent, as well as having the irresistible allure of a space age motor show. (Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood, William Sylvester. Metrocolor, Super Panavision/Cinerama.) Reviewed.

VIVRE POUR VIVRE (United Artists) Interminable soap-opera story of a jet set love triangle, pretentiously padded out with international newsreel footage and gift-wrapped in a rainbow assortment of tints. (Yves Montand, Annie Girardot, Candice Bergen; director, Claude Lelouch. DeLuxe Color.)

******WEEKEND** (Connoisseur) Godard's brilliant, blood-stained assault on bourgeois civilisation—fantasy, cruelty, tenderness and humour perfectly fused in Raoul Coutard's dazzling photography. A masterpiece, calculated to offend most sensibilities. (Mireille Darc, Jean Yanne. Eastman Colour.) Reviewed.

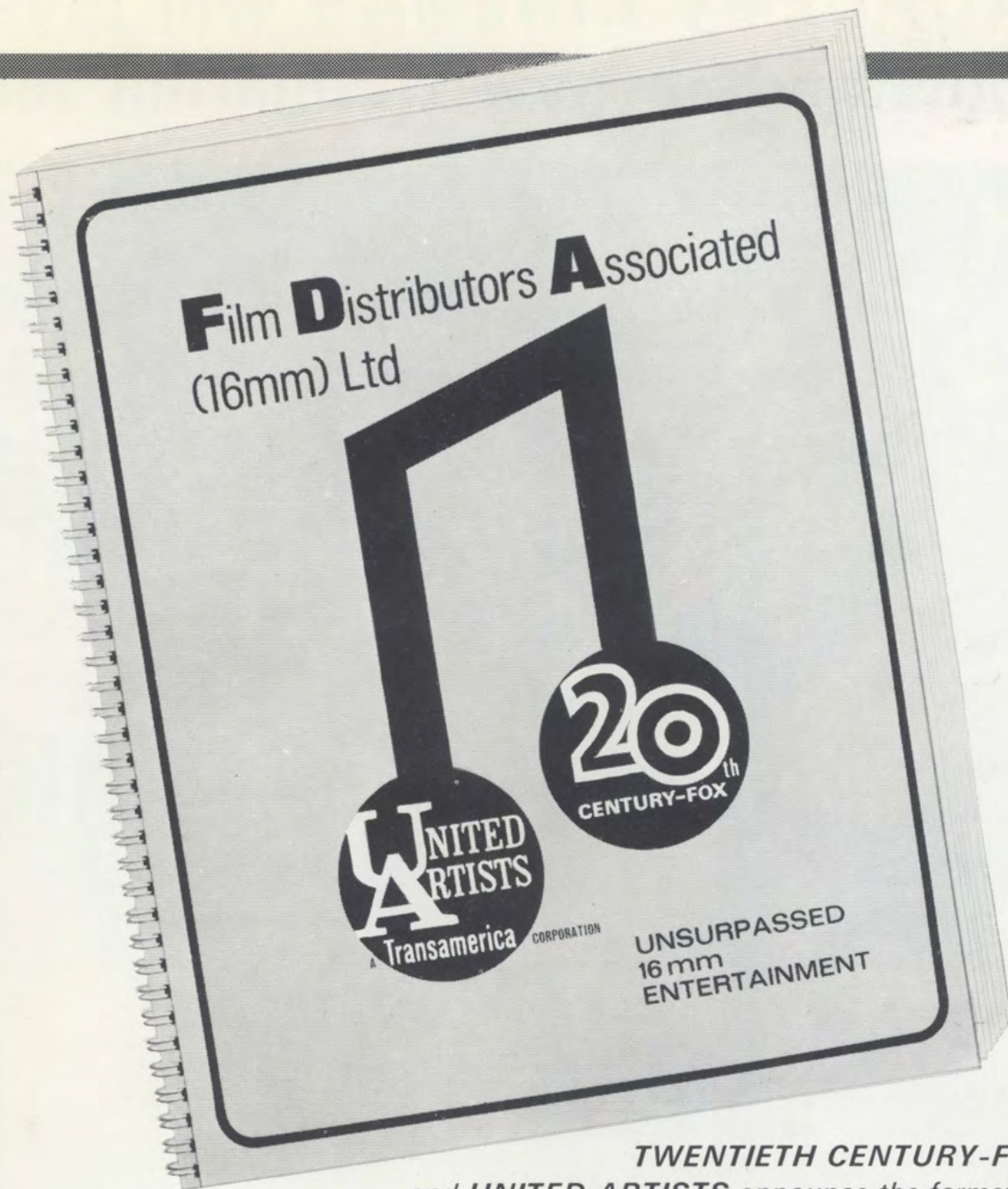
WINTER'S TALE, THE (Warner-Pathé) Unfortunate record of Frank Dunlop's Pop Theatre production, preserved for posterity in strange colour and worse lighting. The cast, with performances still scaled to stage dimensions, give a stirring display of rude theatricals. (Laurence Harvey, Diana Churchill, Jane Asher; director, Frank Dunlop. Eastman Colour.)

WITCHFINDER GENERAL (Tigon) Vincent Price as a self-appointed witch-hunter in Cromwell's England. Excessively and gratuitously sadistic, with lashings of blood and the camera lingering with relish over rape, hangings and assorted mutilations. Fine, if you like that kind of thing. (Ian Ogilvy, Hilary Dwyer; director, Michael Reeves. Eastman Colour.)

WOMAN TIMES SEVEN (Fox) Seven Shirley MacLaines for seven stories of feminine caprice in naughty Paris. Tedium is relieved only by speculation as to whether the next episode can be more boring than the last. It can. (Peter Sellers, Rossano Brazzi; director, Vittorio De Sica. DeLuxe Color.)

***WORK IS A FOUR LETTER WORD** (Rank) Henry Livings's anarchic farce *Eh?* reappears as Peter Hall's first film with David Warner as Val Brose, gangling individualist whose mushroom-growing disrupts the automated boiler-room. The anti-conformist message is far from new but is delivered with great good humour in an almost old-fashioned style. (Cilla Black, Alan Howard, David Waller. Technicolor.)

****YOUNG TÖRLESS** (Amanda/Hunter) Pains-taking adaptation of Robert Musil's prophetic novel about persecution in an Austro-Hungarian military academy. The Third Reich in embryo, but director Volker Schlöndorff is rightly more concerned with the soul-searching of his hero than the mechanics of brutality. (Matthieu Carrière, Bernd Tischer, Marian Seidowski.)



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